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# BERTHA:

A Romance of Easter-tide.

BY

W. J. COLVILLE.



LONDON :  
J. BURNS, 15, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, W.C.  
1884.

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LONDON.



## P R E F A C E.

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KIND READER :

I must beg of you to be very lenient with this, my first attempt to write a Spiritual Romance. In the following pages I have wandered far from the beaten track in which novelists usually run. I have not only written a novel with a purpose, but I have written one with the express purpose of introducing Spiritualism to the reading public, in a popular and taking form. How far I have succeeded, the public must decide. In throwing out to the world this, my first venture in this peculiar line of literature, I venture to believe I stand alone among the novel writers of the day, in that I have resolved to adopt the same style, that I have employed when writing anonymously, both in England and America.

While I ask my readers to regard this little work in its true light, as a Spiritualistic Romance, I beg also, most earnestly and solemnly, to assure them, that while I have altered names, and dates, and places, so as to make my story free from personalities; while I have most studiously refrained from taking liberties with private persons, and their places of residence, I have faithfully inserted nothing as a spirit communication, which I have not the strongest reasons for believing really emanated from a disembodied spirit. Neither have I exaggerated one whit in my descriptions of *séances*, what I have actually, personally observed. I have

heard and seen phenomena fully as wonderful as any I here record.

I have, it is true, made an ideal heroine, by putting three persons into one, therefore, Bertha is a veritable trinity in unity—three persons and one heroine. I have found in my experiences in life, which have been neither few nor short, that it is next to impossible to find all the materials we need to constitute an ideal man or woman in one single human being, and while I have throughout my tale written history under the guise of romance, I have often found it needful to draw from more lives than one to make a model character. Mr. Howard Bruin has been formed after the manner of Bertha. One exception to the rule, however, is introduced in Signor Victor Vulpi. I really did know a gentleman, in my younger days, who was exactly the character I have here portrayed. To him I could add nothing. I could only fail at every turn in giving expression to a tithe of his conspicuous traits and wonderful abilities.

My readers will perceive that I have not written an ordinary love story. Of these there are so many thousands in the world, that I scarcely felt called upon by any want in the book-market, to add to their number, which is already legion; and as I had materials in my possession for a narrative, entitled to some claim, at least, to originality, if nothing else, I resolved to create rather than imitate, and to lead rather than follow.

As I have written solely in the interests of truth; as I have cloaked no conviction, glossed over no iniquity, held back nothing I felt constrained to give to the world; not having written for fame, popularity or praise, the approval or condemnation of my work at the hands of the critics, whom some authors so devoutly fear and worship, has

## PREFACE.

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been the farthest from my thoughts. Written at odd times, whenever my numerous engagements as a public speaker and correspondent for the press, enabled me to snatch a brief interval of leisure which I could devote to my book without neglecting other and more pressing duties, I can not lay the slightest claim for it to faultlessness of style, or polished literary finish.

I hope no one will judge of my capabilities as a writer from this crude effort; as this poor, little book has suffered innumerable disadvantages from having to be written whenever a few spare hours or minutes allowed me to add a fresh page to its slowly increasing size. My publisher, Mr. Burns, deserves great praise for the time and care he has bestowed upon my often almost illegible MSS. To him on the material side of life, as well as to my invisible helpers in the spheres of spirit which surround us, nearer than we oft imagine, I tender thanks for all that deserves praise in my story, or its outward dress.

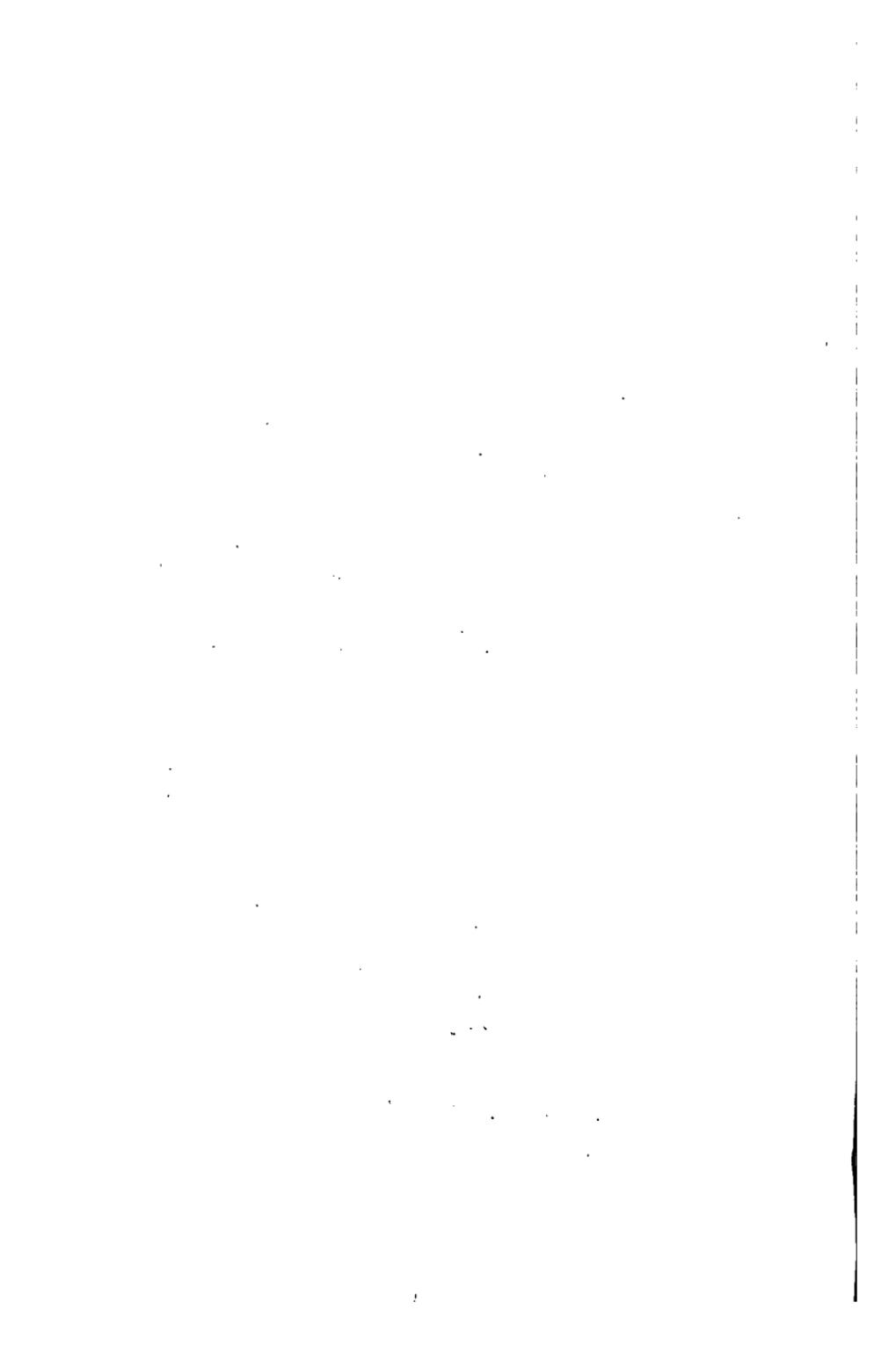
Hoping that other and abler pens than mine will take the initiative from this very humble effort, and enrich the book-market with records of the work of the spirits among men in this our century; and that my little drop in the ocean of popular literature will bring to the front other drops of similar purpose and wider scope,—

I beg to remain, the Friend of every honest Seeker after Truth, no matter what his creed or race may be,  
a willing Servant to my disembodied Prompters,

W. J. COLVILLE.

MANCHESTER, ENGLAND.

*Lady Day*, 1884.





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# BERTHA.

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## CHAPTER I.

### BERTHA.



CLEAR, bright morning in early spring introduces us to one of the most delightful rural districts in the West of England. A pretty cottage overlooking the moor is rendered peculiarly attractive by the number and variety of sweet spring flowers which adorn the large garden in front of it.

A young girl, apparently not more than sixteen years of age, is leaning against one of the old beech trees which give the name to the cottage, or villa, as it is usually called by way of compliment, "Beech-Tree Villa."

Her mood is evidently a sober one, not to say sorrowful. She is very thinly attired for out-of-door musings in March; she is arrayed in a pretty but inexpensive morning-dress, evidently not a production of any far-famed London or Paris dressmaker; a light fleecy shawl is thrown over her gracefully-rounded shoulders, her head is uncovered, save by its luxuriant wealth of golden hair, which falls in unrestrained profusion down her back. She is not large of her age, neither is she what all men would call beautiful, but there is an indescribable charm about her whole

manner and appearance, which renders her far more winsome than any stereotyped style of beauty can ever be.'

Her chief charm, however, is in her voice—she is a born artiste; one of those sweet natural songstresses who pour forth their very souls in thrilling melodies, like unto the lark or nightingale. You can detect no professor's mannerisms in their inimitable style: they are nature's own vocalists, whom careful training may perhaps render yet more perfect in their art, but who are as far superior to the stagey actress who sings only for her living—caring naught for the soul of music, and understanding the language of the soul as little as the piano on which her accompaniment is played,—as the sweet-voiced nightingale is superior to the mechanical singing-bird, devoid of life, which warbles prettily when you wind up the clock-work, but has no feeling of its own to awake responsive echoes in the listener's breast.

Bertha Thrushleigh, for such is the charming young songstress' appropriate name, is an orphan. Her mother, to whom she is still in spirit devotedly attached, left the material form (every one who knew her felt sure for realms of well-merited bliss) when Bertha was quite a little birdie, far too young to leave the nest and fly out into the cold world to gather crumbs let fall by kind or careless persons as best she might. Her father was wounded in battle, brought home insensible, and shortly after joined his wife in the unseen spheres, before Bertha was ten years of age.

Naturally of a shrinking and sensitive disposition; though by no means devoid of spirit, it was no small trial to the tender-hearted girl, to be thus early deprived of home and loving care. Six years before our story opens, she was hustled to London, there to reside till her coming of age with an aunt who had heartily disliked her father,—and could scarcely refrain from speaking of him cruelly, even during his last lingering illness, in which he suffered indescribably, but with heroic patience and fortitude. This woman had never forgiven her youngest and most beautiful sister for marrying the gay young officer, who refused to be caught in the tangled meshes of ambition she presumed to dignify with the name of love, two years previous to his marriage with her sister (Bertha's mother), who was for many years the pet and darling of the concert-going *élite* of the Metropolis.

Bertha, driven by the loss of both her parents, and the

breaking up of the dear old home in Dorsetshire, where her early childhood had been so peacefully and happily spent, was suddenly introduced to a world of shams, artifices and intrigue, against which her very soul, young as she was, fiercely revolted.

Mrs. Sweetgeese, the aunt with whom she was forced to reside, was very glad to receive Bertha into her second-rate lodging-house, which she always assured all her acquaintances was a strictly private residence, rather too large for her own occupancy, in the spare rooms of which she graciously allowed a few old and very dear friends to reside during their annual visit to the Metropolis. The £200 per annum, which Bertha's father, Captain Thrushleigh, left for his daughter's maintenance and education, was very acceptable to the widow, whose husband had left her with an income far too slender to allow of her keeping up the appearances, which were to her all that was worth living for; though her seat in church was never empty, and the Rev. Aloysius Dominic called frequently at 14, Silvern Terrace, to see if the devoted Mrs. Sweetgeese had received any more subscriptions to the fund for the new altar to be placed, as soon as the necessary amount, £2,000, was raised, in the church of the Perpetual Adoration.

Bertha, who was naturally a bright and active child, soon grew accustomed to the hurry and bustle of her new home, if home it might be called. Her £200 per annum, being safely deposited in the bank which held Mrs. Sweetgeese's properties, her education was entirely neglected; and had she been a penniless scullery-maid, she could not have been more completely the drudge of the kitchen. But, somehow, with that unconquerable tenacity of life which true gentility seems always to possess, Bertha grew up unmistakably a lady, and when, at fourteen years of age, she joined the choir of the church of the Sacred Heart, no singer among the band of high-born maidens, who made the gorgeous sanctuary ring with their sweet-voiced praises, could vie with pretty little Miss Thrushleigh in purity of tone and perfection of execution. Her only happiness she found in song. She understood little or nothing of the dogmas of the church, at whose ceremonies she so efficiently assisted; her whole being was absorbed in the contemplation of some ethereal glories, among which she fancied herself floating, while her magnificent voice poured

forth in rapturous strains of melody, the grand old anthems of the Roman Catholic Church.

Often, the youthful singer would be taken to the manager of some great theatre, and be by him requested, if only for a night, to join the chorus in some grand opera, and whenever gold was offered, Mrs. Sweetgeese was only too glad to let her go ; and thus with scarcely as good clothing as an under-housemaid in a second-rate family, and without any more education than she had picked up at the village preparatory school at Silkworm, Dorset, where her earliest years had been spent, this dreamy, beautiful, but eccentric girl, made her way so far into the hearts of the *elite* of church and concert room, that wherever she was known, no *musicale* was considered complete without her presence.

But how comes she at Beech-Tree Villa, in the charming little parish of Knaresbrook, in Devonshire ? How comes she in the garden, which is the greatest pride of Mrs. Maltravers Only, the great lady of the place, who rules the *beau-monde* of Knaresbrook and neighbourhood, by a simple gesture of her haughty, white hand, or a single lifting of those imperious eye-brows, which excite such admiring awe among the less well-connected and highly-born dames of Knaresbrook.

Mrs. Maltravers Only is not a rich woman, but she prides herself upon her birth and breeding. Her husband is a gentleman, in every sense in which that word is used by superficial people. His manners are as polished as any Frenchman's; his linen is of the finest and the whitest; his gloves are faultless; his evening dress most exquisite; but were he suddenly to drop out of existence, the world would hardly feel more loss than it experiences at the death of a summer insect. His wife is proud of him, but she rules him. He acquiesces in all her sayings and doings, echoes her every sentiment, and is really just the kind of husband needed by the frivolous, and yet very capable lady, who as Agnes Montressor, at twenty-six years of age, having refused three offers because the gentlemen who had proposed to her were not above engaging in business, consented—without consulting her heart, which troubled her very little—to become Mrs. Percival Maltravers Only.

How euphonious the name to ears polite ! How *distingué* the appellation ONLY : so uncommon, so *noblesse*; she was so charmed with the euphony, that even her beloved ancestral

Montressor might safely yield to three such unapproachable substitutes as Percival Maltravers Only.

Bertha was patronized by this really good-natured, but insufferably conceited lady, much as a little silken puppy of a smaller breed is sometimes patronized by some large and stately mastiff or retriever; with this difference, that the patronizing lady was bent on making capital out of the charming orphan she invited to her "country seat,"—as she always styled Beech-Tree Villa, which was always a "cottage" till she leased it of a widow for fourteen years, at a lower rental than supplied the amount annually expended by the said widow in repairs;—while the dog apparently has no other object in view than gratifying the very laudable and dogly instinct (which by courtesy to bipeds we call "manly"), which prompts the more successful and exalted to take under their protecting wings the poor little waifs who mutely appeal to them for sympathy.

Bertha, whom we have left all this time standing alone in the garden, leaning against the trunk of the stately, grand old breech-tree, has been invited to Knaresbrook to add attractions to Mrs. Maltravers Only's rather stupid, but very correct, drawing-room.

The Misses Only are in the room at the time when our narrative commences. One of whom, a pale, languid maiden of seventeen summers, aspires to æstheticism, and is now painting very watery-looking sunflowers upon the new embossed note paper, which is ornamented with the figure of a very insipid youth, eating lilies, and playing a harp with one finger. The other Miss Only is performing a similar operation upon an old harpsichord, which for economy's sake, takes the place of a modern piano, but which is ostensibly retained in its post of honour in the Only drawing-room, because its keys were once struck by the immaculate fingers of George IV., who, as Prince Regent, had once been at Knaresbrook, and refreshed himself with ale, cheese, and mince-pie in the widow's cottage, when she was a young and blooming school-girl.

The piano ceases its dreary monotone, and Clarrissa Only rises from her music-stool, arranges her music with an absent air, and then heaving an impatient sigh, walks leisurely to the table where her sister is still painting sunflowers, and addresses her in these words:—

"Oh, my darling Adie, you cannot think how shattered my poor nerves are! That terrible Bertha has absolutely told our Vicar that she doesn't believe God intended the nobility to possess the broad acres their sainted forefathers purchased with their life-blood, in the days when those dear Crusaders won them from the Assyrians, who had defiled Jerusalem."

"Don't notice her, darling," says the dreamy Adelaide, contemplating a sunflower as though it were an angel; "think how sadly her education has been neglected. And she is not æsthetic, as we are, neither has she history at her tongue's end, like you have, dearest. Let us go out, and see where she's been hiding herself all this fair morning. Don't encourage her to talk about what she knows nothing of. You know, Mama cannot sing, neither can you, nor I; and the Rev. Francis Creamcheese, one of the most popular London preachers, is to preach for our Vicar on Easter Sunday; and Dr. Kneesswell has offered Mama the services of two of his best pupils for her concerts in London during May, if she will only make Bertha stay over the Easter services here, and sing the *Sanctus*, as she did at St. Chad's last Christmas. The Rev. Thurifer Chasuble almost went wild over her, and you know, dear, the Rev. Francis Creamcheese is unmarried, and not so ascetic as the priests at St. Chad's; and who knows what may be in store for us if we get him here, and show him our paintings, and talk to him of our visits to Switzerland, while he comes avowedly to direct Bertha how to sing the Easter anthem. You know he's so musical, and so artistic—I mean to set to work at once and embroider him a dozen of those elegant handkerchiefs Mama brought for Papa from Paris. 'F. C.,' what pretty letters! so suggestive of the dear fellow who is a living poem; and then think of this—he has £1,000 a year, besides his living."

By the time this charming dialogue is ended, both girls are out in the garden looking for Bertha, who, in her statuesque loveliness, her beautiful tresses lighted up with the noontide sunbeams, until an aureole seems shimmering round her head, is a very fair picture indeed to gaze upon. The ruby lips are slightly parted, as though in silent prayer; the clear, blue eyes seem to be gazing into the far-off clouds, as though they saw visions of a brighter clime; her simple

dress of soft, pink cashmere, with white tulle ruffles at the neck and wrists, sets off to perfection a countenance, which, though tender and dreamy, yet displays capabilities for loving and for suffering exceeded by few.

As the girls approach her, she heeds them not. Once, twice, thrice have they called her name, before she answers, or even notices their presence; and when she does so, the fair, blue eyes open widely, with a kind of dazed expression of disappointment in them, as though she had suddenly been called from brighter regions to gaze upon the dull realities of earthly dress and fashion once again. Her voice, however, was well modulated, and her smile inviting, as she wished the young ladies good morning (she had not seen them previously, as they had not risen till after ten o'clock, while she awoke at seven, and breakfasted at eight). Her words in answer to their queries as to where she had been, and what she had been doing with herself, only strengthened them in their conviction that she was a strange creature, fonder of animals and birds than of well-dressed and faultlessly educated ladies and gentlemen; and altogether far more fit to lead a gipsy's life in Bohemia, than to adorn the perfectly-appointed drawing-room, where her voice, however, was the chief attraction to the county Squire, the Vicar, and above all, to Dr. Frobisher Kneeswell, the haughty and aristocratic organist and director of the choir at St. Cyprian's, Belgravia, who, being a personal friend of the Vicar of Knaresbrook, and on terms of intimacy with the Rev. Francis Creamcheese, had been prevailed upon to rusticate during Holy Week and Easter Week, that the services at the old Parish Church might be unusually imposing; especially as the Bishop of Heliopolis was to officiate on Easter Monday at a special choral service, when the offertory would be devoted to a foreign missionary society, which employed ten thousand little boys in Palestine, to throw banana skins on the pavements in front of the Jewish temples, that the idol worshippers might break their limbs and be carried to the hospital of the Sainted Judas, where they could have their souls secured for heaven on payment of £150 a year to the establishment of the Episcopate in Smyrna.

"My dear Bertha; what a strange child you are!" said the elder Miss Only to her young visitor. "You seem to take no interest whatever in anything except your music,

and for one so young, I should hardly have expected such devotion to a profession."

"Profession!" exclaimed Bertha. "What is a professional singer? Do you mean one who sings for a living? Well, I suppose I am a professional then, as I get money for my services at the theatres, though not in church. But my music is my life. I should die if I did not sing; and all the money Professor Karl Herrin paid me last year at Covent Garden, my aunt spent in port wine and a new wig; and you know I hate wine and don't wear other people's hair, so it didn't do me much good."

"My darling little Birdie!" said the aesthetic Adie, reprovingly; "What would Mama say if she heard you talk of your aunt in that way? Why, do you know it is positively sinful. Haven't you learnt the fifth commandment?"

"Mrs. Sweetgeese isn't my mother, thank heaven," replied Bertha; "and I'm sure she's not my father: and what honouring one's parents can have to do with talking about a hypocritical old woman, who tries to look young, and tells lies, and beats the servant as a kind of desert to the communion service, to which she goes twice a week regularly, is more than I can understand."

Then coaxingly, laying her soft, little, dimpled hands upon the two girls, and looking up wistfully into their regular but not attractive features, she said softly, in her sweetest accents, with one of her rare and almost angelic smiles—

"Do try and love me! Do keep me here with you for a month or two, at least, and try me, as you want a maid. I will try and do all you ask of me, if you won't send me back again to Silvern Terrace, and that horrible old woman."

Having said this, she burst into a flood of tears, and looked so utterly dejected that the very trees and flowers must have pitied her.

The Misses Only seeing the Vicar approaching, whispered a few kindly words hurriedly into her ear, and telling her to dry her tears and look cheerful, introduced Bertha to the Vicar of Knaresbrook, who was just about to start for London to officiate at St. Chad's during Holy Week and Easter.

The Vicar, the Rev. Pusey Kingscroft, was a middle-aged man, of a rather imposing appearance. No one could see him once, without feeling sure that he was a man who was duly impressed with the nature of holy orders, but though an

austere bachelor, he was not an unkind or unfatherly man. He was, indeed, a good specimen of the ritualistic country clergyman, who keeps the villagers pretty completely under his ecclesiastical thumb.

"So, you are going to sing in my church at Easter, Miss Thrushleigh; I have heard great things of your talent; they are in raptures over you at St. Chad's, and I hope we may be able to form as good an opinion of you here. I am sorry I have to leave for London this afternoon, but my assistance is much needed at St. Chad's, during this week and next, and you will be quite delighted with Mr. Creamcheese, who is a great musical critic."

"Mr. Kingscroft!" whispered the elder Miss Only, into the Vicar's ear. "Do, please, speak a warning word to Bertha about her behaviour. We are so afraid she will say something awful in company. She actually told Mama the other day aloud at the table, that her hair was not all of the same colour. I can tell you, we are afraid of her. And then she actually told me this morning, that she thought it waste of time to send missionaries to the Jews, because Christianity was no better than Judaism. She has been reading some of those terrible tracts Mrs. Bombshell circulated at St. Gregory's Hall last winter when we were in London; and you know her aunt, Mrs. Sweetgeese, is devoted to the Church, and would cry her eyes out if she thought Bertha was undutiful to her spiritual superiors."

"My dear young lady," said Mr. Kingscroft, addressing Miss Thrushleigh; "I am deeply grieved to hear what Miss Only has been telling me. She has positively asked me to impress upon you the need of keeping a bridle upon your unruly tongue. I am too shocked for utterance, to think that a girl of your age, brought up by so pious a woman as your dear aunt, Mrs. Sweetgeese, should dare to speak disrespectfully of God's appointed servants and their work. Let me hear no more of this, or, as you are in my parish now, I shall give you a severe penance. I shall ask these young ladies, very particularly, how you have behaved on my return, and I trust the report may be favourable."

"Sneaks!" hissed Bertha, turning upon the Misses Only, like a young tigress. I thought you were ladies, but if your conceited, patronizing mama has taught you to gossip about

guests in this way, I am glad my aunt did appropriate my father's money instead of educating me with it."

Then with eyes, flashing like a young fury, she turned to the Vicar, saying :—

"Now, Sir : if that's religion, I don't want any ; and if you like my aunt, you'd better marry her ; I'm sure she'd have you if you asked her. And if Mrs. Only thinks I'm not good enough to associate with her stuck-up daughters, she can send me back with you to London."

"Goodness me ! What's all this fuss about ?" says a clear, haughty voice, close beside them. "My daughters stuck up ! Bertha not good enough to associate with them ! I send her back with you, Mr. Kingscroft ! I don't understand. Clarissa ; Adie ; What's all this about ? Explain yourselves instantly," and Mrs. Maltravers Only, evidently not in the best of humours, opened and shut her ivory fan several times during the next minute, awaiting her daughters' responses, which, however, were not immediately forthcoming.

At length, after several impatient gestures from her mother, Clarissa said sweetly, in her subdued, dulcet notes :—

"Mama, dear, I was only asking Mr. Kingscroft to give Bertha a little good advice. She frightens us so ; and you know what awful things she says. Why, only last night she told me she thought murderers ought not to be hung, and we ought to be kind to criminals and not transport them ; and a lot of other revolutionary nonsense, like one reads in the *Infidel Truespade*."

"Clarissa ! you astonish me. And where, I should like to know, can either Bertha or you have seen infidel newspapers ? People in our set don't read such trash. We all think alike. It is vulgar in the extreme for ladies to discuss politics."

Then drawing herself up, like a peacock with tail out-spread, this representative of brainless gentility taps Bertha on the shoulder, and says to her :—

"My dear girl : you must really be more careful. But, come, don't look so angry ; my girls only wanted to put you on your guard. Good-bye, Mr. Kingscroft. So sorry you're going : *au revoir ! bon voyage !*"

And the Vicar, shaking hands with each of the four ladies, passed down the street to the railway station ; while the ladies stood looking at each other as though a member of another species was among them.

Bertha, feeling the incongruity of the situation, laughed hysterically, as she had a large vein of merriment and a keen sense of the ludicrous in her disposition. But her heart was sore. She had so hoped for a little freedom, out here among the sweet Devonian valleys ; but fashion, hypocrisy, religious cant, and irreligious backbiting reigned supreme in the Only household ; and she, poor little one, who had hoped for some sympathy, some companionship with girls of her own age, or a little older, had found the cloven hoof concealed beneath the delicate muslins of the Knaresbrook belles ; and just as cruel a hoof, though, perhaps, rather a more polished one, than that which had been daily striking her such painful blows, ever since her father had left his little motherless girl to buffet with the tide of life alone. What could she do ? What should she do ? Only sixteen,—without a friend in the world. Admirers, who valued her for her voice, she had in abundance, but not one single, kind, motherly breast on which to sob out her woes : not one kindly fatherly voice, to give her wise counsel. Poor little Bertha ! we shall see, ere long, how angels lead her, and how the Heavenly Parent has provided an honoured place in his universe for the little lonely heart.



## CHAPTER II.

## THE VILLAGE EASTER.

Good Friday was over, the Misses Only were assisting the other ladies of Knaresbrook in the decorations of the old Parish Church, which were to be unusually profuse this year. The whole chancel, as well as the altar, was beautifully adorned with the rarest exotics the conservatories of the neighbourhood could furnish ; and these blooms of varied hues, contrasting with a multitude of pure white lilies and an abundance of trailing smilax, produced an effect delightful to behold. No artist's eye could have failed to revel with unspeakable delight in the pretty picture the church and its inmates presented. All the village school girls were there, and many of the young ladies of the parish, among whom the Misses Only figured prominently ; while their officious mother was incessantly busying herself, suggesting alterations in the devices and general arrangement of the flowers, but so afraid of her gloves was she, and so scrupulous about removing them for fear she might soil her hands, in which she took especial pride, that her "assistance" was a hindrance rather than a help to the young people, who, nevertheless, would as soon have thought of questioning the authority of the Queen of the realm, as the right of their distinguished patroness, Mrs. Maltravers Only, to make known her wishes and see that they were promptly carried out.

One voice, however, dared to disturb the calm serenity of the sacred place. Bertha Thrushleigh, who had just completed a beautiful floral crown she had composed of fair white lilies of the valley, gathered with her own hands during her early morning ramble, was about to place it over the cross upon the altar, when Mrs. Only stepped forth, indignantly exclaiming :—

" Bertha ! child. Are you mad, to think of putting that wretched, common thing in the most conspicuous place in the whole edifice ? And, Bertha, do you know what you are doing ? Your foot is actually on the altar ! What would

the Vicar say? And here is the new clergyman, Mr. Creamcheese, just arrived, with Dr. Kneeswell! Do get down at once, child."

"I shan't stir till I've fastened up my wreath; and if you don't like it you can take it down again, and put some of those artificial roses up in its place, over which you went into such ecstacies the other day, because they were not real, and people thought they were. I may be a child, and uneducated, but I hate shams; and I am sure if we are honouring Jesus by decorating God's house, he'll be far more pleased with my lilies, which are like those he tells us in the Gospel to consider, than with your forced, artificial things, which have had all that's natural cultivated out of them. You may shrug your shoulders and lift your eyebrows as much as you please, Clarissa, but my mother and father taughht me to tell the truth and admire what's natural, before I ever saw my aunt; and thus I haven't been trained to deception as long as you have."

While this most distressing altercation was in progress, the Rev. Francis Creamcheese, accompanied by Dr. Kneeswell, had inspected the organ, the choir stalls, the rood screen, the lectern, the font, the pulpit, and other notable features of the church, and was just advancing to the altar, bowing obsequiously, as he thought, to the crucifix, when he suddenly stumbled against the short step-ladder, on the top round of which Bertha was standing, contemplating her lily-wreath with evident satisfaction.

Without waiting for the customary introductions, considered so necessary in artificial circles, Bertha, in the most quiet and ladylike manner, evidently with no idea that she was guilty of a breach of etiquette, spoke up quickly; her animation causing her clear, blue eyes to sparkle brightly:—

"Now, Sir, I can see you're the new clergyman, whom we've been expecting. Your word will be law, though mine goes for nothing. Do you admire this wreath I've just fastened up under the east window? If you say it's pretty, they'll all say it's heavenly, though they've just been calling it a nasty, common thing. I love lilies of the valley; don't you? They look so sweet and innocent, and seem so much more suitable for Easter than those fancy festoons they've hung about the organ."

"Oh, aw, chawming, delightfully pretty;" said the Rev.

Francis, looking straight into Bertha's face, with an insipid smile. "What a divine effect! You must be an artist."

"She's our singer: a dear, sweet young girl from London. Her aunt allowed her, at my urgent request, to spend Easter with us; and, poor thing, she's an orphan, and we take pity on her, she gets so few changes."

"So! This is our new soprano; the little star, who is to shine so brightly on Easter morn, and blaze out so resplendently, when the good Bishop from abroad is here on Monday. Permit me to hear you sing, Miss \_\_\_\_."

And Dr. Kneeswell, extending his hand politely to Bertha, helped her down the steps, and escorted her to the organ, which the Misses Only and their bosom friend, Miss Shiners, had just finished decorating.

The church was hushed in an instant. Mrs. Only bit her lip behind her lace-bordered handkerchief, and hid her annoyance as best she could. A few grand chords upon the organ, a soft prelude of a few second's duration, and then Bertha, with no music before her, her eyes directed towards the chancel ceiling, as though she was conversing with the originals of the pictures which adorned the interior of the chancel dome, sang, as few mortals have ever been heard to sing, Handel's glorious *aria* from the "*Messiah*": "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Such jubilance, such pathos, such inexpressible tenderness, combined with majesty, in her rendering of these sublime old words, held her audience spell-bound, as with bated breath and straining eyes they watched the girl, so utterly unconscious of their scrutiny, sing with such taste and finish as could scarcely have been attained at her time of life, had she been subjected to the most careful training under the best masters from the time she was seven years of age; and Bertha, two years before, when she had joined the choir of the church of the Sacred Heart, did not even know her notes.

It is needless to say the organist, who was an eminent *Miss Doc.*, was enraptured. Taking both her hands in his, and gazing with deepest admiration into the limpid blue eyes, he exclaimed passionately:—

"My dear young lady. Your voice is marvellous; your style faultless. The greatest singers on the stage cannot surpass you. In a few years, if your health be spared, you will be the greatest singer in all England. I am overwhelmed

with joy at such an acquisition to our choir. You must sing the *Sanctus*, the *Agnus Dei*, the hymn at the consecration, the solos in the *Magnificat*, indeed, everything, 'to-morrow, and on Monday also; the other singers are nothing to you. Pardon me, young ladies, I meant no offence to you. I am, perhaps, so enthusiastic over music as to be impolite,' he added, hurriedly, as he saw a very unmistakable frown on the forehead of Miss Shiners, the amateur contralto, who thought herself perfection; while the Misses Only whispered, not quite so inaudibly as they intended:—

"We shall have our sealskins out of her yet, and Mama, just think about that bonnet you saw at Macmillan's—100 guineas, and worth every farthing of it, with that old lace on it. We can put up with a little impudence now and then, from a goose which can lay such golden eggs as Bertha can. Dr. Kneeswell is president of the Handel and Haydn Society, and will give anything we choose to ask for Bertha's services at the next triennial festival, and Mrs. Sweetgeese will never know what he's paid for her, and Bertha's too much of a savage to enter into business contracts. Let's treat her kindly, Mama; we shall miss it if we set her against us, and she's got the tongue of a vixen. I confess I'm afraid of her: and what a strange, far-away look she has in her eyes. I wonder if she thinks she sees spirits; or do you think she does see them?"

While the marketable value of Bertha's talent was thus being discussed among the Onlys, the object of their comments was receiving the most flattering attentions from Mr. Creamcheese, who was, to use his own words, "exactly, altogether, too utterly carried away" with Bertha's inimitable vocalization.

That evening there was a grand soiree at the Onlys; and on the following day (Easter Sunday) Bertha even exceeded the most sanguine hopes of her most enthusiastic admirers. Never had the high celebration been performed with such magnificence, within the memory of the oldest inhabitant of Knaresbrook; while even Dr. Kneeswell, proficient organist and choir-director though he was, accustomed to listen to almost faultless *arias*, was so captivated with Bertha's rendering of Handel's gem—"I know that my Redeemer liveth"—at the offertorium, that he positively refused to play any accompaniments whilst she was singing; afraid that even his

perfect rendering of the music might detract from the unparalleled effect produced by the fair singer's voice. The churchwardens refused to proceed with the collection till the singer's voice had ceased, while the Rev. Francis Creamcheese and his assistants at the altar stood transfixed with wonder and amaze as the pure, sweet voice rose and fell; sometimes loud and clear as the matin song of the lark, at others soft and distant as one might imagine the voices of the angels, sounding in lower regions to entice unhappy spirits out of gloom, bearing them gently aloft on waves of sweetest melody, anear to realms celestial.

The solo ended, the grand old organ poured forth a volume of divinest harmony; the collectors hurried through their interrupted task; the silver plates were piled with gold, silver, copper, bank-notes, and even valuable jewels. A bell rang sharply out to announce the approach of the consecration act, and once again the same clear voice rang out, this time accompanied by choir and organ, but rising clear and full above the mingled voices and strings. The *Sanctus* was sung as never before in Knaresbrook. The congregation forgot to look at their manuals of devotion; forgot the gorgeous scenic effects in the chancel, as the clear, sweet voice shouted—"Hosanna, in the highest! Hosanna, in the highest!" till the altar bell stopped the music, and the assembled multitude fell prostrate before the elevated host. Again and again resounded these strains of harmony divine, till at length the service concluded, the "Hallelujah Chorus" ended, the crowd of visitors pressing round the chancel rails, to gaze upon the floral glories which bedecked the sanctuary.

The attention of a lady was drawn to a beautiful recumbent figure, all in white, with lilies at her breast, lying apparently insensible beside the organ. The beautiful singer must have fainted. The lady hurriedly called others, who pressed around the motionless form; but, surely such peace, such rapture, as beamed upon the countenance of the lovely girl, could not be brought on by a common fainting fit. One of the ladies, addressing her and touching her arm gently, was surprised to see the red lips part, and hear the sweet voice pleadingly request,—

"Do not take mother away! it is so long since I've seen her."

And then, the startled girl rising to her feet, looking round upon the crowd, bewildered, exclaimed :—

"Where am I? Where have I been? What have I been doing?"

Questioned about the service, and the fatigue she had experienced by singing so loudly and so frequently, she answered only by a half-dazed look of enquiry. She had been in another clime; she had heard no bells and smelt no incense; she had seen no earthly flowers and heard the voices of no chanting priests: her Easter morning service had been two hours communion with her mother. No sermon on the resurrection of the fleshly body, delivered in the mellifluous tones of the fashionable high church preacher, had reached her. To her, the demonstration of a spiritual resurrection had been complete; and yet, she only realized that she had been to sleep, and dreamed a blessed dream.

Who then had rendered the difficult music of Cherubini's Mass with such perfection. Who then had sung with such precision the *aria* from the "*Messiah?*" Can any doubt that beautiful woman—who, as Senora Lagrymas, had been the idol of the musical world for fifteen years, and whose place had never been adequately filled since her transition to a higher world—had, through the entranced and well nigh transfigured form of her darling and only daughter, given to the souls of the parishioners of Knaresbrook, an Easter feast which, could they but have fully appreciated it, would have led them there and then to exchange the shadow for the substance, and forego the hope of carnal resuscitation at the last great day, for the blessed consciousness of a present resurrection of the spirit.

Bertha was taken home in the Only carriage, seated beside the Rev. Francis Creamcheese, who was beside himself with admiration of Bertha's talent; and the celebrated Dr. Kneaswell, who, with Mrs. Only sat opposite to them, was so far carried away that all through dinner he was so much engrossed with the narrative of Bertha's experience in the church that morning that, fond as he was of good living, the waiter had to ask him three times over if he would take a glass of wine; while the roast lamb became cold on his plate, and was removed before he tasted it, so absorbed was he in the conversation.

Mrs. Only, in a superb dinner gown of purple moire antique, smiled complacently upon her daughters, who strove in vain to interest the gentlemen in themselves. Their bewitching

toilettes were completely thrown away upon both these exquisites, the two most eligible men of their immediate acquaintance. Dr. Kneeswell was even more eligible than the clergyman, having a regular income of not less than £3,000 per annum from his profession, in which he stood exceptionally high, besides a very fair amount of private property; a widower under forty, with only one child, a boy of ten, who was receiving his education abroad. Many were the lingering glances the almost dowerless Misses Only bestowed upon him.

At 3.30 p.m. there was to be a short children's service occupying less than an hour. Bertha, being always willing to exert herself for others' pleasure, had consented to sing "O Paradise," and the "child's Hymn to a Guardian Angel," before and after the catechizing.

With the prospect of receiving a present of flowers, an introduction to the new clergyman, and of hearing the singer over whom their parents had gone into ecstacies at the 11 o'clock service, all the children of the district were in the church, when the Only carriage deposited the clergyman, the organist, and the singer at the church doors just in time for the service. Many were the audible whispers which reached other ears besides Bertha's; as she, accompanied by the organist, walked up the aisle to the chapel on the north side of the chancel, which held the organ, and from that moment the Misses Only looked upon the singer as a dangerous rival.

Several gentlemen were heard to exclaim: "Isn't she jolly!" "by Jove! that's a sweet face," "Great Caesar! what eyes and hair she has, and what dainty little hands." These and several other equally characteristic and well-bred masculine ejaculations were heard arising from the Squire's pew, in which, after the service had commenced, the Squire's eldest son—a splendid young man of twenty-five or thereabouts, who had that very morning arrived from a hunting expedition in Norway, and had gone to church on purpose to see as much as hear the new singer—lifted his opera glass, and gazed steadfastly at the rapt expression of something more than ordinary devotion, which lit up the fair songstress's entire countenance as she sang—

"O Paradise! O Paradise! I want to sin no more;  
I want to be as pure on earth, as on thy spotless shore  
Where loyal hearts and true, stand ever in the light,  
All rapture through and through, in God's most holy sight."

"And it's little sin you've committed I'm thinking, to judge by your heavenly features. I only hope my girl as I lost last winter is as pure now after all these months in purgatory—God rest her soul,—as you is this minit," muttered a kind-hearted old Irishwoman, who with her three little boys, had come all the way from Michaelsville, five miles distant, to see the young lady who had been described to her as the "very image of her Bridget."

The singing ceased; the Rev. Francis Creamcheese muttered the few prayers which preceded the catechizing, as though he thought it an "awful bore" to have to read them at all, and then addressing the children, he talked to them for nearly half-an-hour, about saving their pennies to beautify the house of God ; and told them how necessary it was for them to get up at daybreak and come to church, so that their bodies might be made ready to rise in glory at the judgment. He then gave them the best advice, no doubt; he was able to give; and from his plane of frivolous thought, no doubt, illustrated the subject of good influence admirably. Taking a very fine cambric handkerchief from his pocket—one out of the dozen which the Misses Only had presented to him that morning as a mark of their undying fealty to the cause of true religion, of which he was so saintly a representative—he waved it before them, and asked them if they could not detect a delicious fragrance arising from it ; telling them that this fragrance was due to some delicate perfume which he had had presented to him with the handkerchiefs, by some dear, good, young ladies, who aspired to as great saintliness in their devotion to the servants of Christ, as that attained to by the sainted woman who spent three hundred pence in perfuming the feet of Jesus. This elegant toilette requisite was to him a symbol of the grace of God in the soul, conferred upon those who had by devotion to the Church merited its bestowal. The handkerchief itself was an emblem of the human spirit, as it should be, clean, white, spotless! After telling the children to aspire to become like delicately perfumed cambric handkerchiefs, that they might make sweet the air wherever they went, he told them that angels looked just as he did. They were young men, and he was under thirty; they wore white, and he had a new surplice on of snowy purity ; and had white hands, and waved immaculate handkerchiefs : thus leaving upon the minds of

the children the impression, that angels closely resembled clerical fops with scented handkerchiefs. He added : " Now, you must all kneel down and look right at my back, while the young lady who sings so beautifully, invokes and praises one of those celestial beings, like unto whom you must all strive to become."

This twaddle ended, and the affected clergyman having crossed himself and turned to the altar, kneeling in the centre of the nave on one of Mrs. Only's best sofa cushions—carried into the church on purpose for him, and that he might consecrate it by kneeling upon it—Bertha's voice again sounded out, this time in Faber's beautiful and truly spiritual hymn—

" Dear angel, ever at my side, how lovely must thou be,  
To leave thy home in heaven to guide a sinful child like me.  
Thy beautiful and shining face, I see not though so near ;  
The sweetness of thy soft low voice, I am too deaf to hear."

Bertha's idea of the angel was, however, not the fop with the scented kerchief, but the fair and beautiful arisen mother, of whose presence she was only as yet conscious in her dreams (or trances, as her periods of seeming sleep often were), but whose image was ever before her mental eyes, and whose real existence, as a guardian spirit in the world of souls, she never for a moment doubted. Hers was one of those intuitive natures which discern spiritual realities spiritually. Creeds and catechisms, dogmas and ceremonies were all of little use to her, and of little hindrance also, for she dwelt in a world of her own ; put her own interpretations upon Scripture and the doctrines of the Church, and was rapidly developing into a decided little radical, but, nevertheless, into a very sensitive and reverential one. She hated shams, abhorred hypocrisy, saw through delusions, but was ever ready to laugh or cry at the joy or misery of any sentient creature ; and like all true *artistes*, could never esteem the proprieties and conventionalities of the world so highly as she valued nature, unpolluted and unrestrained by man's futile endeavours to improve mankind by making deceit a virtue.

No very striking incident having occurred at the close of this, the Children's Service, Bertha returned to Beech-Tree Villa to enjoy a cup of Mrs. Only's two shilling tea, which, according to her statement, was imported by a special friend direct from China, and cost her six shillings ! So it did, the quantity she last purchased ; for she always bought three

pounds at a time, that she might treble the price of the article, when speaking in its praises, without committing herself to the utterance of a single falsehood.

Poor Mrs. Only! if you only valued truth as you value the flattery of the empty-headed noodles who constitute your "set," and see through your every device,—for each member of your "set" is as artificial as you are yourself,—to how much better use might you put that really grand and noble inventive genius, with which you are by nature so highly gifted, than when you desecrate it to such paltry ends as the endeavour to capture a wealthy heir for one of your unfortunate children, who, if she ever get the desired Prince Charming to marry her, will rue the day when she attempted to win a husband by false pretences to wealth and position.

The tea hour passed all too quickly; lively chat, spiteful gossip, and other saintly occupations common in Christian households of the genus "correct," consumed the time till 6.30, when Mrs. Only, turning to Bertha, said:—

"Go upstairs, dear, and make a fresh and bewitching toilette, as soon as possible, as Evensong commences in half an hour."

Bertha was not upstairs five minutes; she had only one dress fit to wear to church, and her ornaments were the fewest and the simplest; but as she descended the staircase, her cheeks glowing with health (Mrs. Only's glowed with rouge), and with the effects of the clear, cold water, which was the only application she found necessary for the preservation of youthful bloom, the Rev. F. Creamcheese and Dr. Kneeswell, standing together in the hall expatiating upon the music, uttered a spontaneous cry of delight.

"What a lovely creature!" said the clergyman. "She reminds one of the angels."

"No, I don't," said Bertha, laughing. "I'm not a young man, and I don't use scent on my handkerchief. You see I don't forget what I hear in church."

Mrs. Only, perceiving that Bertha was again guilty of a breach of etiquette, smiling sweetly, so as to show her white, regular teeth (every one of them false, and everybody knew it), said in her most suave and drawling accents:—

"Don't notice her, gentlemen; she's only a little savage we're trying to civilize."

"If savages are as fair as she, and have such sweet voices,

I only hope the people in heaven won't be all civilized," muttered Dr. Kneewell, extending his hand to Bertha, and helping her into the carriage (a fly), which had by this time arrived to escort the party to church.

On arrival there, fully ten minutes before the appointed hour, they found entrance by the main doorway an utter impossibility. Not only was the church literally crammed; but the porch and charchyard even were thronged with the eager multitude. Forcing their way through the crowd, with no little difficulty, they at length succeeded in reaching the private door, which led into the vestry (or sacristy, as it had been called since the advent of Mr. Pusey Kingscroft), and literally standing upon one another's toes, the two Misses Only and their mother managed to squeeze in by the side of the choir seats against the organ.

Dr. Kneewell shared his seat at the organ with Bertha, who was much interested in watching the contortions of the eminent professor during the elaborate voluntary. The altar-boys filed in, in solemn procession, carrying a crucifix and several banners, and two censers smoking with fragrant incense. Three clergymen followed, and last of all, the Right Hon. Lord Bishop of Heliopolis, who was to preach on the following evening in aid of the Fund for Persecuting the Jews in Palestine.

In vain the master of ceremonies endeavoured to force his way, heading the procession round the church. The aisles were literally blocked, making the procession an impossibility; so with great pomp, lifting his hands in haughty blessing, the representative of Anti-Semitism in the Holy Land turned to the altar, and knelt before it, while the choir, led by Bertha's clear, young voice, sang the jubilant Easter hymn, "Jesus Christ is risen to-day."

The service proceeded, the Psalms were chanted antiphonally by the choir of ladies and the priests and altar boys. Then followed the *Magnificat*. The church was hushed, as though an angel were literally singing. Out through the open doors and windows floated the divine melody, as Bertha's clear, sweet voice rang out again, louder and clearer each time the chorus died away to give place to her solos, which were every alternate stanza.

At length came the climax. Something marvellous had evidently been expected at the close of so glorious a perform-

ance. In the last solo, written as a duet by the great composer, two voices rose and swelled together; one voice, utterly unlike Bertha's—a deep, clear tenor, powerful but unutterably sweet. At times it would sing alone, then Bertha's heavenly notes again pealed forth, then both together.

The visible soprano and the invisible tenor chanted the *Gloria*, loud and clear, above the mighty organ, above the united voices of the two choirs, who sang the *Glorias* in unison,—these voices rose and fell, till at length, in one grand and jubilant "Amen," they sank to rest, and the astonished clergyman, with tremulous accents, faltered through the Second Lesson. *Nunc dimittis* followed, then a few responses and collects. In the anthem, "This is the day which the Lord hath made," Bertha's solos were as sweet and pure as ever, but the mysterious tenor was heard no more.

The sermon, very short, and not inspiring in so crowded and over-heated a building, was followed by the hymn, "The strife is o'er," when lo! just before the Bishop at the altar gave the solemn pontifical benediction, with which the service was to conclude, the two voices rang out again. This time the tenor was louder and stronger than before; even the haughty bishop was overcome, and when passing out from the altar rails, as the last Psalm, *Laudate Dominum*, was being sung to an adaptation from Handel's glorious chorus, "The heavens are telling," he looked in vain for the marvellous tenor, whom he no doubt expected to see beside the soprano, near the organ; but only the organist and the choir of maidens could he see.

Who, then, could have sung in so divine a tenor? A singer with such a voice could have commanded £100 a night, and been considered reasonable in his demands, in grand Italian Opera. How the mystery of the tenor was solved, it is scarcely yet in place to tell. No doubt, some of our readers, who are not altogether at sea with regard to the source whence such wonders emanate, may have already made a pretty accurate guess, but to the parishioners of Knaresbrook the event was a miracle without a philosophy.

## CHAPTER III.

## WHO WAS THE TENOR?

THE following evening (Easter Monday) the church was, if possible, even more thronged than on the previous day. The strange story of the mysterious tenor had spread far and wide, and from far and near eager multitudes had gathered, hoping in some way to solve the mysterious problem. However, the greater portion of the congregation firmly believed he was an ordinary mortal like themselves, but a mortal with so extraordinary a voice that it would have been well worth while to have gone to considerable trouble and expense to hear him, even though no mystery had been attached to his performance.

At 7 o'clock precisely, the church doors opened. Ladies tore their choicest dresses, and ruined their laces for ever, in their frantic endeavours to squeeze through the crowd into the church. At five minutes past seven, the aisles were blocked, and during the interval of twenty-five minutes, before the grand procession filed in, the pitch of nervous expectancy was so high that a panic in the crowded building was feared. A lady, who fainted from the heat, was with great difficulty handed out, through one of the large open windows in the south aisle, into the churchyard, literally blocked with a mass of human beings, who were struggling with each other as to which should get the best chance of catching some echo from the marvellous strains within.

The service passed off superbly, but with nothing to specially mark it except Bertha's singing, beautiful as ever, and the gorgeous ceremonies in which the Bishop of Heliopolis seemed to be the God, whom all the worshippers adored; until the Bishop, evidently conscious of the presence of some mysterious power, knelt humbly before the altar, forgetful of the pomp around him, as Bertha's clear, sweet voice rang out alone through the silent church, in the opening stanza of the *Veni Creator*, which was sung kneeling before the sermon.

The choir and congregation unitedly were to sing the alternate stanzas. The second stanza was sung heartily, but not wonderfully well; but whence came the voice which sang the third? Bertha's tongue was silent. Rigid and motionless appeared the girl; the pupils of her eyes distended, she reminded one of some strange seeress or pythoness of ancient times. All the while, a voice of exquisite sweetness, a woman's voice, rose and fell and floated through the building; over the gaily decorated and brilliantly illuminated altar, out through the open windows into the churchyard, back again into the church, up to the ceiling, down to the floor,—so sweetly, so charmingly, chanting the words of supplication to the Holy Spirit, that none who heard it could feel other than awed into devotion, and carried beyond all earthly strife into that heaven, where only pure and holy spirits dwell.

Those who had heard Senora Lagrymas in her palmiest days, declared, when questioned closely afterwards about this voice, that it was hers unmistakably; but grander, richer, purer, fuller, than it had ever been even in those marvellous displays of skill or inspiration, which had earned for her, during her brief but brilliant career, the title of "Prima Donna, azoluta."

Was Bertha a ventriloquist as well as so wonderful a vocalist? Had she indeed inherited from her mother this wondrous gift of song, and added thereto this miraculous power of commanding her voice to travel in this unprecedented way? But hark, this cannot be Bertha, neither can it be the Senora whose tones were recognised so perfectly a moment before: it is the voice of the singer who startled the congregation on the previous evening, and not only his voice again, but his voice travelling, floating, as did the sweet Senora's, in the previous solo.

The choir and congregation cannot and dare not attempt to sing. Dr. Kneeswell is silent at the organ; no accompaniment can he supply to harmonies so divine. But the crowning effort of these voices, so mysterious, is when the closing stanza is reached. They float and sing together, while a chorus of many voices is heard dying away in the distance, and the last "Amen" is chanted by the choir invisible, as the haughty Bishop of Heliopolis, this time moved to tears, ascends the pulpit almost falteringly, and tries to deliver his carefully prepared sermon upon the "Jews in Palestine."

But no : the words he had thought to utter will not come, he cannot refrain from speaking of the music they had just heard. He preaches upon Saint Cecilia : he alludes to the fair, young Bertha, as one who, by the grace of God, may yet serve the church as St. Cecilia served it. And then telling them he had forgotten all he meant to say to them about the missions to the Israelites, he should ask them not to contribute on that occasion to the establishment of the Church in Smyrna, but to a home he had there and then resolved to found in Heliopolis, where poor little boys and girls should be tenderly cared for, and thus would they best be honouring their divine Lord, whose rising from the dead they were then commemorating : who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven :" and, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Moving his hand in blessing, he leaves the pulpit. The altar lights are all ablaze ; the organ peals forth ; the acolytes enter from the sacristy with lighted candles and smoking censers ; and while the choir sing Faber's beautiful hymn : "Hark, hark, my soul ! angelic songs are swelling," £563 14s. 10*½*d. is collected for the benevolent object for which the Bishop so eloquently and touchingly pleaded.

Ah ! they know not how near the angels are, and how sweetly their voices are even now, again, about to re-echo through the church. Before the solemn benediction is pronounced, the two strange voices have again passed forth, filling the church with sweet echoes from the bright beyond.

At length it is all over ; the lights put out ; the congregation dispersed ; but where is Bertha ? Some irresistible impulse has led her into the dark recess behind the organ, and there she is discovered quite alone, motionless, white as death, and trembling from head to foot. The excitement, the heat, the singing, must have been too much for her. She is taken home very gently and kindly by the organist, who has been eagerly searching for her for several minutes. She allows herself to be led by him, but to his questions she makes no answer.

Arrived, at length, in the Only's drawing-room, she seems suddenly to awake from sleep. She knows nothing of where she has been ; nothing of the service. Mrs. Only suggests that she is in love with some celebrated tenor, who has fol-

lowed her to Knaresbrook ; and, if so, will she introduce him as he would be such a heavenly acquisition to their *musicales*.

Mr. Creamcheese calls her a "sly little puss," but one who can purr very sweetly, and wants to know whether her cavalier cannot be persuaded to come out of his hiding place, and take dinner with them on the following day.

Of course, by this time, the mystery is quite cleared up : Bertha had been found behind the organ, and the young man who sang so divinely had entered the church secretly and stowed himself away so as to give the congregation a surprise, and, if possible, a scare.

However, they had all enjoyed a rich treat, and the collections had been enormous. The Bishop, who was a stranger, was more than delighted. But for Bertha to persist in innocence of the whole affair was simply absurd : it was worse, it was deceitful ; it was positively mendacious. And the innocent cause of this singular phenomenon, which had so entranced the multitude, was positively insulted and hardly dealt with, by the woman with the painted face and handsome dress but common mind, who could assign no higher reason for so heavenly an event than a paltry intrigue practised by a girl of sixteen summers, whose character was straightforwardness itself. Poor butterfly of fashion ! what little paltry wings your soul must have, if nothing pure, and true, and holy can appear to you above the plane of fashionable drawing-room perfidy.

To the Bishop of Heliopolis, however, the matter appeared in a very different light. To him the supernatural was immensely attractive. He had read and studied the "Lives of the Saints," and longed and prayed that miracles might be restored to establish the Christian hierarchy throughout the world. To the people of the parish he treated the matter lightly, but not flippantly. He was a stranger, and had no opinion just then to offer ; but when writing post haste to Rev. Pusey Kingscroft, he announced his conviction that something decidedly out of the common had occurred.

Dr. Kneeswell was so utterly carried away with the music, that he had no thought to bestow upon the miraculous side of the performance. He would give anything to secure Bertha for his concerts. She was a fortune in herself ; but Bertha, after the tremendous strain put upon her system, and the unkind treatment she had received at the hands of the Only

ignoramuses afterwards, had become seriously ill. She lay for weeks in a precarious condition. The doctor said her nerves had received a severe shock, and that her heart was affected, and must have been for years; and that she must be kept away from all excitement.

The Onlys (Mrs. Only especially, who was not a hard-hearted woman naturally) were kind to her during her illness and convalescence; and it was decided between them and Dr. Kneeswell, that Bertha should join the Handel and Haydn Society as a soloist, on consideration that Mrs. Only received a handsome allowance out of Bertha's salary.

Mrs. Sweetgeese was written to, and she was glad enough that Bertha should do anything whereby her wine-cellar might be replenished, and her dressmaker's, milliner's, and hairdresser's bills met with less difficulty; and so these designing women sought to make merchandise of the little singer's royal gift. How they succeeded, and what became of them, and what became of Bertha, future chapters will reveal.



## CHAPTER IV.

## BACK TO SILVERN TERRACE.

As soon as Bertha was well enough to return to London, she was back at 14, Silvern Terrace. Mrs. Sweetgeese, who had missed her services at the table, in the kitchen, and in various other ways rather seriously during her absence, welcomed her effusively; and kissing her on both cheeks, called her at once into the dining-room, where the boarders had just sat down to 6 o'clock dinner.

Mrs. Tavernsby, the four Misses Tavernsby, Mr. Reginald Twiddlethumbs, Mrs. Price Vicarsby, Mr. and Mrs. Redhead Bullock, Mr. Curr Whelpslay, and Mrs. and the two Misses Jerome Catseyes formed the little circle of very dear friends who occupied the rooms which were too large and numerous for the sole occupancy of Mrs. Sweetgeese and her niece, and the one servant who performed all the work, which did not fall upon Bertha, in the Silvern Terrace household.

It is needless to say Mrs. Sweetgeese kept a boarding house. We all know she did not; she had friends constantly staying with her, and she was so considerate of their tender feelings, that she permitted them to pay her a very trifling sum weekly for the very great privilege of dwelling under her roof, and eating very badly-cooked food, and not too much of it as a rule, at her anything but hospitable table.

During Bertha's absence of rather more than a month; Mrs. Sweetgeese had changed her maid-of-all-work fifteen times, had engaged and dismissed twenty-seven different charwomen, and then in utter desperation had implored her darling niece, whom she missed so sorely, though they fought like Kilkenny cats when the darling niece was at home, to return and supervise her disordered household. Mrs. Sweetgeese knew also that the London season was rapidly approaching; that her house would be crowded; and that Bertha was just the only person she could lay her hand upon, who would rise at six and go to bed at midnight, and receive nothing but the food she needed to keep her alive, and a few

clothes to cover her, for the arduous and multifarious services which she was perpetually expected to render.

Of course, the dear auntie had heard of Bertha's triumphs. Had not Rev. Pusey Kingscroft been her invited and honoured guest (at three guineas per week). Had not he read to her one day after dinner, the letter of the Bishop of Heliopolis, narrating the marvellous occurrence in Knaresbrook church; and had not she only the other day received two letters—one from Mrs. Only, and the other from the celebrated Dr. Frobisher Kneeswell, dilating upon the marketable value of such a voice as Bertha's?

Bertha, then, was no longer simply the pretty girl who brought £200 a year with her to Mrs. Sweetgeese, and ran all the errands, and waited on the table, etc., and then entertained the company so charmingly by singing, till the tired eyes closed at 11 o'clock at night, after her long day's toil. Bertha was a goose which had begun to lay golden eggs. The story of the tenor she pooh-poohed. She was a woman of very inferior mind, the direct opposite of Bertha's mother, who was so gentle, refined and *spirituelle*. But tenor or ~~no~~ tenor, mystery or connivance, Bertha's voice must be sold to the highest bidder, and systematic lying must be resorted to, to prevent the songstress from imagining that her talent was filling her aunt's coffers with gold. Did she not remember the fright she had received, when Bertha had one day, in a fit of anger, told her some horae truths about her treatment of the young girl's father, which blanched her cheeks and curdled her blood, hardened hypocrite and deceiver though she was? Had not Bertha been whipped by one of the priests of S. Cyprian's, who was at that time staying in the house, for daring to reproach her aunt for appropriating money left by Bertha's father for his daughter's education? And now that Dr. Kneeswell was infatuated with her, idolized her singing, and could not be bribed, perhaps, to become the dupe of the designing Mrs. Sweetgeese, that excellent lady felt she no longer stood upon *terra firma*.

And then, horror of horrors! some one had spoken to her about Spiritualism, and suggested that Bertha was perhaps a "medium!" Had not Miss Bearstricks, her bosom friend, actually told her she knew of a young lady in Kensington, at whose house she visited, who wrote out messages from the spirits, which sometimes revealed most unwelcome secrets.

If Bertha should develop as a medium, what might not the consequences be? The whole plot laid by Mrs. Sweetgeese to deceive her niece's father might be discovered; her annuities might, some of them, fail her. Bertha's income she would assuredly forfeit, if the truth leaked out. And had not Bertha already shown signs of mediumship? Had she not told her aunt many things she could have discovered in no ordinary way?

Spiritualism, if true, was unmistakably of the devil. She should, of course, resolutely set her face against it, and get the clergy of S. Cyprian's to stand at her back when she denounced it. But in her secret heart she believed it to be a mighty truth. Inwardly she dreaded its revealments more than she would acknowledge, even to herself. An evil conscience is its own accuser, and Mrs. Sweetgeese often trembled, and tossed at night restlessly upon her pillow, when she thought that perhaps the parents of the girl she had so cruelly wronged, were looking down upon her in disgust, and would some day testify against her, before a higher than any earthly tribunal.

When these meditations distressed her, she would rise in the early twilight of a cold winter's morning, and hurry, wrapped up in furs, to the altar at S. Cyprian's, thinking that by covering her sinful soul in a cloak of pharisaic righteousness, she might cheat the devil of his due, and somehow manage to sneak into heaven! Poor woman! we will not condemn her too harshly. Her life was not the happiest, and early training had much to do with her worship of the golden calf. Mammon was in reality her god; but she had a conscience after all, and ritual observances were the balm she applied to heal its aching smart.

Bertha was not treated quite so hardly as before. She looked so fragile, after her recent illness; and Dr. Kneesswell had written so earnestly to request that she might have perfect rest for a while, at least, that Mrs. Sweetgeese could not venture to thoroughly overtax the girl, for fear her voice might fail her and the golden eggs never get laid.

The few remaining days of April glided quickly by. May, the month of "Mary," opened, and Bertha received her aunt's consent to sing every evening as well as on Sundays at the church of the Sacred Heart, which she loved to visit. The Sisters of Charity were very fond of her, heretic though they

accounted her, for though she loved the Catholic music, she could never be induced to join the Church. She had been confirmed at S. Cyprian's, at her aunt's command when fourteen years of age, but told the curate who examined her that she didn't believe the bishop's hands were better than anybody else's, and that she hated the Athanasian Creed, and thought the Articles of the Church of England a pack of rubbish. Of course, so unorthodox a young lady shocked the nuns at a Catholic Convent, but as they agreed with her in deprecating High Church mummeries, which counterfeited the solemnities of the Church of Rome, they felt that in time she would be drawn into the true fold, and they were very kind to her. Of course, her voice was to them a priceless treasure, and she was always in the church, no matter what the weather was, or how the other singers stayed away; and she was paid nothing, and some of the delinquents received high salaries. So Bertha was not without friends at the Sacred Heart, and the brisk walk to and from the church, even in bad weather, was not unwelcome, and Rosary and Benediction in a pretty church were a foretaste of heaven after a day's work in the kitchen, and the many annoyances to which she was subjected through her aunt's incessant interference and unending squabbles with the servants, and disputings with the tradespeople because they charged her for goods she wilfully forgot she had ever received or ordered.

Towards the end of May, the first rehearsal of the "*Creation*" was called, at which the soloists must be present. It was to take place in Cackleton Hall, and would be quite an event of the season, as the chorus had been successfully drilled previously, and the soloists were all first class professionals. Madame Fandango Assoretta, the superb contralto, had been specially brought across the Atlantic from New York, where she and the newspapers declared her remuneration was £150 nightly (it was £150 monthly, if the truth were known). Signor Desolato Infuriori was the tenor, and Signor Vesuviano Etnani, basso. Bertha Thrushleigh was the soprano.

"What! That chit of a child! absurd, ridiculous, infamous! Dr. Kneeswell is a fool, an idiot. What can he be thinking of;" shrieked Madame Assoretta.

"He ish a brute beast;" belched forth the basse.

While the exquisite tenor, who had stood for two full

hours before his looking-glass, arranging his too utterly too too lovely hair, smiled benignly on the pretty little singer, who, in her white muslin dress, with lilies at the throat and lilies in her golden hair, excited his most sincere admiration. Though he was a coxcomb and a flirt, and was by no means a man of irreproachable behaviour, he knew instinctively that Bertha was pure as the driven snow, in thought as well as in act. She was such a contrast to the women who threw themselves at his feet,—that little iceberg, as she was, he could not fail to love her; and she touched the man's higher nature, and as our narrative proceeds we shall see how, through her, light was introduced to dispel the darkness which had gathered round his heart, and how the angels in the years to come employed him in their blessed service.

But we must not linger over the future, which as yet lies dark before us, so asking our readers pardon for many digressions from our story, we will end this chapter by detailing briefly the effect produced upon the *elite* of London by Bertha's heavenborn song.

The hour having arrived to commence the rehearsal, Dr. Kneeswell himself handing Bertha to her seat, the post of highest honour on the stage, led the chorus marvellously. The orchestra and chorus of 350 voices, performed with consummate ability. The basso and the tenor, and the conceited overbearing contralto, performed their parts as usual. The basso was always off the key. The tenor screeched high C in miserable falsetto, imagining that his alteration of Handel was a vast improvement upon the great composer's orginal production. Madame Assoretta panted and fumed, grunted and growled, and finally sat down enraged, because applause was forbidden on the programmes, and she knew three gentlemen in the stalls to whom she had given purloined tickets, who were dying to *encore* her.

Bertha's turn came next. So young a girl, so slight of frame, so simply dressed, so unassuming in her manner: Was she the new star, over which the eminent professor raved? But hark, her voice ascends, at first rather tremulously. Why, surely she is not going to break down! Dr. Kneeswell is growing nervous; Madame Assoretta, jubilant,—how she longs to see the new soprano utterly discomfited. The voice sinks almost to a whisper; the girl turns deathly white and trembles. Is she going to faint? Her eyes close; her music

falls from her hand ; when, lo ! before the slightest action can be taken, the voice of Senora Lagrymas fills the building. The solo is listened to with breathless attention, but at its close the audience rises to its feet *en masse*. Ladies tear off their rings and throw them at Bertha's feet, while frantic transports of delight rend the air.

The rehearsal can proceed no further. The young girl is taken home in Lady Maud Armadale's carriage, and introduced as the greatest singer of the day, to a German Prince who is the Lady Maud's most honoured guest ; while the astonished and affrighted Bertha, the innocent cause of so much joy and so much consternation, is lying fast asleep before another hour has passed away, upon the luxuriant amber satin couch in Lady Armadale's most gorgeous guest-chamber.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE ORATORIO.

From the day of the rehearsal, and Bertha's acquaintance with Lady Armadale, the fame of the fair young songstress spread far and wide over the great Metropolis.

Lady Armadale was a person of considerable energy : her leading characteristic was what might aptly be termed Go-a-headativeness. When she was pleased she was enraptured ; when annoyed, enraged. She was, moreover, a woman of very strong impulses and generous friendships, and while her enthusiasm lasted, the orphan girl, with whose voice and presence she had been so suddenly and completely charmed, would surely find in her a most powerful champion and devoted admirer.

Lady Armadale would not hear of Bertha going back to her aunt's, until she had quite recovered from the extreme nervousness which so much hard work, coupled with excitement of no ordinary kind, had brought on. In vain did Mrs. Sweetgeese protest that her household was going to destruction, and that she could not do without her darling Bertha. Her ladyship would hear of nothing but that Bertha should remain her guest throughout the London season, and then accompany her to her husband's shooting box in the Orkneys.

Lady Armadale's husband had no fondness for the gay world ; the incessant scurry and routine of London gaieties oppressed him. He was fond of country fields and meadows, wild flowers and birds and animals, and while professedly engaged in shooting, very few birds owed their death to his rifle. He was, indeed, a pure-minded but rather weak and very sensitive specimen of humanity. He married Lady Armadale from motives of sincere affection, doubtless, but he had a fortune and she had a title, and both families were well pleased with the union. Their married life had been very happy, taking all things into account ; and then he was simply Lady Armadale's husband ; she was both lord and lady, master and mistress ; and he was quite content to be

with her occasionally, so long as he knew she was happy, and not running into extravagances they could not afford.

And she was a careful, upright woman; virtuous in all things according to her lights; very effusive in the display of her feelings when they were aroused; but apt to be inconstant and fond of new charmers. She doated on actresses and singers. She truly loved art, and a great *artiste* was sure to win her smiles, until she had seen and heard all she could accomplish, and then Lady Armadale, like a bee which had extracted all the honey from one flower, would soon flit to another. But she did not waste or kill the flowers from which she drew life's sweetness; she rather helped them to yield more; and many were the struggling artists who had received from her ladyship a cheque for £50 for a very inferior painting,—but she wished to patronize and encourage them; and many were the aspiring candidates for the lyric stage, who had good reason to bless the day when first her ladyship's shadow fell across their pathway.

To Bertha this high-born dame was love and gentleness itself. Had Bertha been her own daughter, she could scarcely have been more solicitous for her welfare; and without letting the secret escape her lips in the young girl's presence, Lady Armadale had been particularly drawn to Bertha because she discovered that she was a medium, and many were the *séances* which had been held in her splendid *salon* in Grosvenor Square. Many were the messages from the spirit world, this fashionable lady had received and acknowledged. Fearing, however, that Bertha was not yet prepared for such a revelation, and knowing that she sang at a Roman Catholic church, and that her aunt's friends were bigoted Ritualists, she enjoyed the divine minstrelsy and appreciated its source, without openly in Bertha's presence attributing it to its rightful cause.

Lady Armadale was herself a medium, and what is known as a developing medium, also, and in her presence Bertha's voice gained new power, and a foundation was laid by the invisibles for the great and wondrous work which, in the years soon to come, would require all the strength, both mental and physical, which she could possibly obtain.

As a flower opens in the sunshine when it is gently tempered in the early spring, so Bertha's mind and body alike developed in the society of her new friend. It was so de-

lightful to her to meet a woman of the world; who was really in the upper circles, who acted out her own nature without duplicity, after having been so long among the Sweetgeeses and the Tavernsrys and the Onlys, and other people of a like nature, who professed to be devoted to the service of the Almighty, but whose only god was Mrs. Grundy, and in whose honour they told lies and practised deception a hundred times a day.

Here, in an atmosphere of art and yet of much frivolity, of outspokenness and yet of much appreciation of externals, Bertha became prepared to take her place a year or two later in society, possessed of that knowledge of the world, without which a novice feels her position so painful and humiliating. Lady Armadale's tutelage was the very thing she needed, and during the few weeks preceding the grand Triennial Festival, Bertha grew strong and rosy, and when the eventful opening night arrived, more lovely and self-possessed than ever did the fair, young girl appear, as arrayed this time in a charming toilette of white satin, adorned with purple heartsease, she stepped out of Lady Armadale's magnificent chariot.

Quite a sensation she created as she entered the *artistes'* room, escorted by her ladyship. Madame Assoretta was there, in more than regal splendour. Her dress was of amber satin, with a train fully as long as the entire length of any fair-sized serpent. Her coiffure was a bewilderment of art, while her head was surmounted with a tiara of diamonds, as she said, presented to her by the King of Spain when she sang in grand Italian Opera in the Opera House, Madrid, but in reality composed of Paris brilliants, bought especially a few days before for the Handel and Hadyn Festival. Signor Desolato Infuriori was also present, after a painful agony of four hours' duration, during which he had flogged his valet sixteen times, and bitten a piece out of the hairdresser's little finger because he fancied he smelt one of his hairs burning, as his curls were being elaborated for the auspicious event. So were all the chorus in every conceivable variety of style, elegance and vulgarity.

Not one of the gentlemen could forbear bowing low and gazing intently into the eyes of the youthful Prima Donna. Not one of the ladies could suppress the expression of admiration which rose to their lips, as Bertha and Lady Armadale

made their *entrée*. Madame Assoretta acknowledged herself "flibbergasted," though she exclaimed *sotto voce* :—

"That chick of a child; just fancy the cheek of her! The brazen little hussy, to come into my presence, and look me down as though the world-worshipped Assoretta were not even that little upstart's equal!"

But the tenor was sincere. The impression made upon him at the first rehearsal had deepened with every succeeding interview he had had with the charming young cantatrice; and to-night, in the very height of his glory, in the retiring room behind the stage of the Grand Alberta Hall, where 10,000 people had paid from five shillings each for standing room to five guineas for a single fauteuille, to hear him sing the *Cujus animam* in Rossini's "*Stabat Mater*" and the *Incarnatus* in Mozart's "*Twelfth Mass*," only last season, he forgot any longer to stand before the full-length pier glass, enamoured of his own transcendent charms. He forgot, actually, how the diamonds (real in his case) gleamed on his immaculate bosom, and how the sapphires had been honoured, when they were permitted to fasten his snowy cuffs. Even the delicate little curls which rested so cherubically on his forehead, and the gloves which had required nearly an hour to draw on and button, and the dress shoes which had used up three boxes of powder before they would consent to cover his perfect feet,—all were forgotten, as there stood before him, self-possessed and smiling, a radiant creature with no jewels whatsoever; no paint or powder, or corked eyebrows on her sweet young face; no false, or tortured, or coloured hair—perfectly natural were those abundant ringlets, and natural also those lovely flowers which contrasted so vividly with the snowy whiteness of her dress.

Bertha was under seventeen, and had not learned the arts of fashion, and to the eyes, not only of the celebrated tenor, but of all the gentlemen in the crowded house (and ladies, too), who craned their necks to examine her critically, she was the fairest thing in all the crowded room.

And, oh! how she did sing. Some fears had been entertained lest the enormous auditorium might prove too vast for the young girl's vocal powers. Dr. Kneeswell had been roundly abused by some of his patrons who had not heard Bertha at the rehearsals, for not engaging an older and more efficient person; and when the basso failed utterly to fill the

room with his stentorian tones ; and even the tenor was inaudible sometimes in the upper gallery ; and Madame Assoretta could not be heard upstairs at all, in the solo upon which she prided herself so mightily—" He shall feed his flock like a shepherd"—a feeling of disappointment began to pervade the assembly ; and the audience was, in anything but a glow of enthusiasm, when the little, stately, white figure arose with perfect grace in every movement, and as Madame Assoretta sat down, raising a perfect hurricane on the stage with her tremendous peacock fan, Bertha commenced to pour out her very soul in song. " Come unto him " had never been rendered as it was that evening ; no, not even by Senora Lagrymas in her days of greatest triumph. Encores were forbidden on the programmes. What mattered prohibitions on such a night as this ! The audience rose to its feet, and clapped and shouted as though beside itself.

" Senora ! O Senora ! have you come from heaven to sing to us ?" cried the Dowager Lady Turtle, who had ever been one of Senora Lagrymas' most fervent admirers.

The solo was, of course, repeated ; yea, thrice was it rendered, each time, if possible, more beautifully than before ; then the oratorio proceeded in usual course.

But the house was weary of the contralto, and the basso, and the mighty chorus ; even the idolized tenor palled upon them. Bertha alone they wished to hear, and when again she rose and sang, as, perhaps, human lips, before nor since, have never sung—" I know that my Redeemer liveth," the certitude of life immortal was there and then so palpably made manifest, that from that hour many who had never thought of higher things than fashion and amusement, were deeply moved to dwell on themes celestial.

Even Madame Assoretta was moved to tears. It was not altogether affectation which caused her to hide her face behind her gorgeous fan, as Bertha's tones, clear and penetrating as the blast of silver trumpets, rose through the air, filling every crevice in the immense edifice. " Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that sleep." She had a little sister sleeping under the shade of the willows in a suburban cemetery, not so far away ; and on the following morning, closely veiled, a lady, whom no one would have thought to be the haughty Assoretta, might have been seen, with her own hands planting purple heartsease on

a little grave, over which rose a simple stone with this inscription : "Alice ; aged six years. 'Suffer little children to come unto me.' " Her love for this little sister was the one bright spot in her selfish heart, and as she knelt there in the silent graveyard, the warm spring sunshine and soft scented air penetrating her veil, and stirring within her breast sweet reminiscences of her old home in Dorsetshire, and the days when she was a little girl playing with the little sister whose body rested now beneath the sod, she prayed long and fervently that, if the dead were alive and could come back again, she might receive some sweet assurance that her little Alice was among the ever-living.

As she still knelt on, a choir of sweet, young voices rose from an adjoining plot of ground, singing to the Blessed Virgin, on this the final day of the month devoted to her honour. A pleading request they made to her whom they called the mother of their Creator, to pray for the holy souls who, suffering yet in purgatory, could be helped by the prayers of the faithful on earth. The hymn soon ceased, and then arose the voice of the Prima Donna of the Oratorio, singing as artlessly as a young bird—" *Kyrie Eleison; Christe Eleison,*" while the chorus responded to each ejaculation. All through the Litany of Loretto this lovely voice sang on : " *Virgo clemens* " ; " *Virgo fidelis* " ; " *Virgo prudenterissima*," and other titles too many to enumerate; this seraphic singer applied to that ideal of womanhood transfigured, to which the prayers of Christendom arise, till at last with the *Agnus Dei* the singer ceased, and the cemetery again was silent.

White flowers and purple heartease were strewn on many graves that day, and many listeners to that thrilling song, passing by the walls and gates, wondered who that sweet, young girl might be who led the virgin choir of the church of the Sacred Heart, at Bayswater. Little they thought that this was the girl who had all London at her feet, whose name was on every tongue, of whom every journal spoke in leading articles, commenting upon the unprecedented triumph of the young soprano whom Dr. Kneesswell had brought before the public, and who was at the time of writing the honoured guest of one of the most deeply respected ladies of title then in London.

And what of this strange girl? Did her success spoil

her? Was she too proud to follow her accustomed avocations? No; that very evening at Benediction, simply attired as when she was quite unknown, she was in her place leading the choir at the church of the Sacred Heart. Perhaps she rather wondered why so many carriages were at its doors that night; perhaps she marvelled why the aisles were blocked, and why so many seats were two shillings-and-six-pence each, when they usually were free at Benediction. But Father Donnelly, S.J., was to preach upon the Assumption, on behalf of the schools, that evening, and this was the concluding service in the month of Mary.

If her voice had sounded marvellously in the church at Knaresbrook, here at the Sacred Heart it was, if possible, more glorious still. By this time the power that inspired her had gained a full control, and when on this eventful evening the charming notes arose in one of the most beautiful but lengthy and intricate compositions to which the noted hymn, "*O Salutaris hostia*," has ever been set, the effect upon the congregation, the choir, the priests, and acolytes alike, was simply indescribable.

Sister Magdalen played the overture for the litany, and then arose those pleading notes again—"Kyrie Eleison Christe Eleison"—as though an angel were calling upon God to have mercy upon his sinful children here below. No answering choir swelled out the alternate stanzas; it would have been sacrilege to have joined their voices with harmonies so divine; but here, as at Knaresbrook, the full, rich notes of the mysterious tenor joined with the soprano. Together they sang Rossi's far-famed "*Tantum ergo*," and at last, in *Laudate Dominum*, they filled the church with such a burst of heavenly song that gained for the beautiful temple a reputation for its music it has sustained until this very day.

Lady Armadale, perhaps, and a few others understood more about the tenor than they felt it discreet to reveal. Sister Magdalen supposed the wonderful singer from the Grand Alberta Hall had been captivated with the beautiful young lady, and had followed her to the church, and when she kissed the fresh young cheeks, and told her how beautifully she had sung that night, she begged her, with tears in her eyes, to be careful of the men, who would seek to seduce her through their flattery and boasted love.

Sister Magdalen was a good woman, rather stern, perhaps,

but kindly at the core. Very just, and very jealous was she of the purity of the young and innocent, and very unsparing of their seducers. Bertha's bewilderment surprised her. Could that young girl be so deeply dyed in worldly intrigue that she could look so astonished when questioned about the gentleman who sang with her? But the good sister was neither censorious nor uncharitable, and so she believed that some young man, an Italian of rare attainments possibly, had followed her to the church unknown to her.

The collection for the schools had amounted to near £300, and Bertha was in good hands when chaperoned by Lady Armadale. So the good woman was comforted, and hoped and prayed for Bertha's safety; and as she watched her Sunday after Sunday, Thursday after Thursday, festival after festival, and detected no change in the beautiful young face, except, as months rolled by, a pleading sadness, and at length a faltering in the firm young steps, and an added devotion in the manner of the young girl in church, she grew satisfied that she was far removed from the perils which beset the worldly and the vain.

The London season passed, Bertha's triumphs increased rather than diminished. She sang "Lucia" in Covent Garden to the fullest house that season, which was an unusually brilliant one. But just as the season closed she caught a serious cold, which brought on hemorrhage of the lungs, and London grew empty, and the doctor said she must not go with Lady Armadale to the Orkneys, because the climate was too cold.

People went out of town, and forgot the singer who had so entranced them. She had lost her voice, and something of her beauty. Mrs. Sweetgeese had refurnished 14, Silvera Terrace throughout, and replenished both her wardrobe and her wine cellar out of Bertha's earnings. Mrs. and the Misses Maltavers Only had got new drawing-room carpets and sealskin jackets, and marvellous costumes from Worth, and bonnets from Macmillan, and so the world had feted the little singer, and fed the lark with gilded seed; but the rats ate the seed, and the bird went hungry, and again imprisoned in the dreary cage, with no companions but Mrs. Sweetgeese and her crew!—Is it to be marvelled at that Bertha's beauty faded, and her chest grew weak, and her face betokened the sadness of her wounded spirit?

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE LONG-LOST BROTHER.

NINE months have passed since the incidents related in the preceding chapter. Bertha has spent the closing months of summer, the autumn, and the winter in drudgery at Silvern Terrace. Lady Armadale has been in Paris, and would gladly have taken Bertha with her, but Mrs. Sweetgeese threatened to reveal some secret prejudicial to her doctor's reputation, unless he called upon her ladyship and assured her that Bertha's health would be permanently injured unless she remained among the fogs of London, as some peculiar properties contained in London fog were necessary to Bertha's recovery. So Lady Armadale, only half believing him, but with no desire to take an invalid to Paris with her, called at Silvern Terrace laden with gifts. But Bertha she could not see alone, even for a minute; either Mrs. Sweetgeese or one of the five Tavernsby's, or that atrocious churchwarden of S. Cyprian's, Mr. Catseyes, was sure to be present, and Lady Armadale was obliged to content herself with giving Bertha £100, and lots of bonbons, and some pretty trinkets. Telling her to be sure and correspond with her regularly, she took an affectionate adieu.

No wonder Bertha's eyes filled with tears as she kissed the kind, matronly lady good-bye. Lady Armadale was so much concerned about leaving Bertha in such a house as her aunt's, that her coachman had to address her seven times before he could obtain any directions from her ladyship as to whether she desired yet further to pursue her way; and as Lady Armadale, with unusual curtness, at length said "home," the man could not but perceive that something had ruffled her ladyship's usual suave serenity. Impulsive and angry he had seen her before, but to-day she was positively surly, and besides, evidently distressed.

Returning home to dress and dine, she seemed impervious to all efforts on the part of her guests to draw her into con-

versation. And what was her powdered coachman's surprise when, instead of going to her favourite cousin's *soirée* on this the last of her evenings in town, she ordered the carriage to put her down at the Institute of Psychology, in Red Lion Square, where Miss Lotela Flowers, from America, was giving a series of weekly *séances* for the benefit of a sister medium, who was left a widow in deep distress.

Entering the room in which the *séance* was to be held, she was much struck with the neat, orderly appearance of everything around her. The window curtains were of snowy whiteness, the ceilings, the paper on the walls, the upholstered furniture, all were clean and neat; and the president of the Institute, Mr. Ayrton Thistle, completely charmed her with his frank, open countenance, and his evident resolve to see all things conducted fairly and honestly. Some people disliked the honest Scotchman; he knew too much about their peccadilloes, and when he was aroused he could make mention of them in the *Two-edged Pruning-knife*, a weekly newspaper which was published at the Institute, and had a circulation of many thousand copies weekly.

Miss Lotela Flowers was a *petite* lady, very graceful, very agile, faultlessly attired; she was, in short, one of those pretty, little, refined, American ladies of whom many spiritual mediums are exceedingly good representatives.

After some very good music on an excellent piano, and some nice singing by the Misses Carlton, Miss Flowers, clasping her small, white hands together, offered a touching prayer, so short, so beautiful, so utterly to the point was it throughout, that not one who heard it could have failed to receive a blessing. Its beautiful words were these:—

“Our Father and our Mother, who art in heaven! Let these dear ones of earth, who come to Thee to ask that they may receive some tokens of immortal life, receive through this instrument on this occasion whatsoever is most befitting to their needs. If any are sad and heavy-hearted because their dear ones have departed, oh! grant their loved ones, who are now in spirit, the power to manifest to them tonight. If any are perplexed, and wander on in darkness fearful of death, because they know not of the beauteous worlds which lie beyond the silent River, let them receive a ray of light from yonder heavens, to put to flight their darkness and

their dread. O, Heavenly Parent! bless us all; make us love the truth, and tell it; make us true to all that conscience dictates, and as we live above anxiety for man's applause, and dread of man's displeasure, may we feel Thee smiling in heavenly sunshine on our hearts; teaching us in joy and sorrow, in grief and pain, in life and death, to say with heart as well as lip: 'O God! Thy will be done.'—Amen."

The circle was formed of fifteen sitters. Lady Armadale was allowed to sit next the medium, who at once began addressing her:

" You've got a lovely squaw with you. Used to be a singing squaw before she went to happy hunting grounds up above. She says she's got a papoose down here, that she's often sung through; but her papoose isn't strong now, and she's not happy, and this mammy squaw wants you not to let the beershop people and the cacklers keep hold of her, 'cause we've got a lot o' work to do through her yet, and she's already one of the best mediums the spirits have ever developed, though she don't know it. And, oh, my! isn't her hair lovely? and hasn't she got pretty eyes, and such a lovely skin? She looks almost like an angel."

The voice ceasing here, and Lady Armadale feeling sure the communication referred to Bertha and her spirit mother, said:

" Now, my dear little squaw, can't you tell me if I can do anything to help this young lady, whose mother seems so anxious to protect her?"

" Oh, yes! you can do lots, but not this winter. In the spring time she's going to have a great surprise. Her rubber is coming from over the water. He was quite a little papoose when he was lost; and his sister, she only just remembers him. You mark my words if 'Sunbird' don't tell the truth. Can't tell any more now, so good evening."

'As there were many other persons in the room, some of whom had come long distances to receive messages through this far-famed medium from their spirit friends, Lady Armadale was far too much the lady to press her own queries to the exclusion of those of others; so she sat patiently till all the others had received messages, many of which were very satisfactory; and when the meeting broke up, she asked

permission to sit alone with Miss Flowers for a few minutes, at the same time apologizing for keeping her any longer in the close room, after she had sat for two full hours, talking almost incessantly, first to one and then to another of the company.

Miss Flowers readily acceded to her request, and they sat for more than an hour, talking with the invisibles about Bertha and her wondrous future. Senora Lagrymas controlled Miss Flowers directly, and spoke in earnest tones to Lady Armadale, telling her that her darling girl must undergo much trial before she was fully prepared for the glorious career of usefulness which was so soon to open up before her, not only as a singer, but as an inspired teacher of great spiritual truths.

The interview ended, Lady Armadale handed Miss Flowers a £5 note, and when that lady said she could not think of accepting so large a sum, her ladyship said :—

“ Use the balance of what I owe you, then, in giving messages to the poor, whom you could not freely serve unless the wealthier paid you fairly for the expenditure of your precious time and strength.”

Lady Armadale also saw fit to show her appreciation of the Institute, by buying a few good books in the book store below. She then drove back to Grosvenor Square, and was off to Paris early next morning.

She had written many times to Bertha since that memorable evening, but the spirit had told her the time had not yet come to make known to Bertha the secret of that wondrous power she only temporarily had lost.

Berth's voice, however, had not really gone, it had only lost much of its power and compass. She still sang at the Sacred Heart, and occasionally bursts of melody would rise and swell and enchant the listeners, but the marvel of the London season had faded into obscurity, and probably very few who heard the girl's sweet and now often rather weak and trembling voice in church, had the faintest idea that the girl who still went regularly to church in all weathers, was the marvel of the previous May. On Christmas Day, indeed, she had sung the *Adeste Fideles* inimitably, and was much prized as a valuable addition to the voluntary choir, but she was growing so much weaker now, that the priest kindly advised her not to overtax her voice, by attempting to sing

through all the elaborate offices of Holy Week; hoping that if she rested herself meanwhile, she might be strong enough to give them a genuine treat on Easter Sunday.

And Easter Sunday had almost come. It was Easter Eve, this year towards the middle of April. Bertha was tired almost to death. She had been up since 4.30 that morning, working like a slave, as the house was to be very full over Easter, and the household cares were unusually numerous. Mrs. Sweetgeese had had an attack of bronchitis, and was very irritable, and needed incessant waiting upon. Knowing Bertha could serve her as no one else could, she kept the girl constantly beside her.

It was about 3.30 p.m. when Bertha was aroused, by a loud double knock at the front door, from a fit of sleepiness which had quite overtaken her in the kitchen after arranging the contents of the larder, and had compelled her to lie down upon the sofa in the basement sitting-room. There was still one room vacant in the house, and Bertha, against Mrs. Sweetgeese's wishes, had put a paper up in the window—"Apartments Furnished." Something had forced her to put up that paper. Again and again had her aunt ordered her to remove it, but an irresistible power she could not turn aside had forced her to show unusual obstinacy, and there the offending card remained until it caught the eye of a very handsome and *nonchalant* young gentleman, who was thinking of changing his residence, and was rather struck with the appearance of 14, Silvern Terrace. So, as he strolled past the door, he made up his mind to inspect the apartments which were to let, feeling somehow impressed that he would like them.

Bertha hurriedly tidied herself sufficiently to answer the door, though feeling her heart pump unaccountably as she mounted the stairs, little anticipating the great and beautiful surprise in store for her, as she opened the door and listened to a young man's musical but haughty voice, asking her what rooms she had to let. She was only conscious that somewhere in her dreams, perhaps, she had seen that face, and heard that voice before. Quick as lightning, visions of past days arose in her mind. She had had a little brother, not quite two years her senior; she had played with him in the dear old times. He had fair, blue eyes and golden locks, and was withal, even in his infancy, both handsome and im-

perious ; and in his childish accents she had heard that never-to-be-forgotten ring, which sounded now in the voice of the stranger at the door.

This gentleman looked twenty-one, certainly ; but her brother could be only nineteen. Could this be he ?

So paralysed with strong emotion was she, that for fully a minute she kept him waiting for her reply, and when at length she found her tongue, he laughed heartily at her embarrassment, and attributed her bewildered conduct to his own attractions, of which he was fully conscious.

While she was showing him the vacant room on the first floor, and making him acquainted with the rules of the house, he had dropped a card from his pocket—a stylish little, gilt-edged affair, with this inscription : " Signor Victor Vulpi, Tenor." Victor was her brother's name ; Vulpi, an old family name on her mother's side.

" Is that your name, sir ? " said Bertha, picking up the card and handing it to him.

" Yes, it is. Does it please you ? "

Though usually reticent with strangers, something impelled her to reply :—

" It reminds me of a dear, little brother I lost when I was quite a child, and you reminded me of him in some mysterious manner when you stood before me in the doorway, and that is why I could not answer you at first. I loved him dearly in the bygone days, before my mother died and left me ; and I'm not happy here. My aunt is not kind to me, and I have too much to do. My health is breaking, so you'll forgive me for being so impolite, sir."

The young man, smiling graciously upon her, said :—

" Well ! perhaps I am your long-lost brother. Who knows ? and anyway I'll see you are no more put upon by your old dragon of an aunt. By Jove ! you've got a sweet voice. I shouldn't wonder if you made a fortune in the opera yet. I will exert my influence on your behalf, at any rate, and I stand high in my profession, I can tell you."

" I sing in church now," answered Bertha ; " and I have sung oratorio, but my voice is not what it was this time last year. I'm not so strong as I was then."

" I'm going to sing in church to-morrow," answered Signor Vulpi, " at the Sacred Heart, in Bayswater ; it's not far from here. Do you know it ? "

"Why, that's where I sing regularly. How strange that you should have come here ! Did anyone recommend you ?"

"No ; I saw the card, and came in as soon as you opened the door for me. Well, I am glad you and I are to sing at the same church to-morrow. Won't we have jolly outs together. Let the aunt say what she pleases, I'll be your friend for ever."

Somehow Bertha seemed to have taken a new lease of life since this young man, who so closely resembled her brother, had entered the house ; and what confirmed Bertha's first idea that it really was her brother, was the fact of Mrs. Sweetgeese turning ashy pale when Signor Vulpi entered the dining-room to dinner at 6 o'clock. In vain did she protest afterwards that her head was aching, and that she was sure the new boarder was a scamp, and Bertha had no right to engage any lodger without consulting her, especially a young man. The look upon Mrs. Sweetgeese's face was one of recognition ; so was the answering look on Signor Vulpi's. On the countenance of the former the expression was one of rage, but fear withal ; on the latter's face was a look of triumph, not unlike the expression of a tiger who has just secured some eagerly-hunted prey. They knew each other, and the old woman and the young man were implacable foes ; of this, there could be no doubt. That Bertha's aunt was the under dog in the fight was evident also, for no one could have watched, even for a moment, the expression of chagrin, fear, and, we might say, horror, upon her countenance, without arriving at the inevitable conclusion that there were secrets in her life of no honourable character, with which this handsome and dauntless young stranger was quite familiar.

In vain did Mrs. Sweetgeese complain of the draught, the heat, her cough, and a thousand other things which had no connection whatever with her embarrassment ; in vain did she declare that the young man was a total stranger to her, but a person against whom she instinctively felt there was something wrong ; but he had come, and come to stay, whoever he might be, and whatever he might know ; and in him Mrs. Sweetgeese found the only effectual foil to her deep-laid schemes she had yet encountered.

Not much sleep did the intriguing woman know that night, and when, after she had retired to bed (she had gone early

that night, avowedly to be up in time for the very early celebration at S. Cyprian's on the morrow, but really because she was alarmed lest her fears should excite comment among her boarders), she heard Bertha's clear, sweet, ringing laugh in the drawing-room, immediately under her room, and a young man's voice joining with her niece's and evidently provoking that annoying laugh, she felt certain she was the subject of conversation. She could bear it no longer in silence, so after kneeling at the fireplace with her head in the chimney for fully ten minutes, without being able to catch the drift of the conversation or hear her own name mentioned even once, she relieved her feelings by rapping loudly on the floor with an umbrella, to stop the noise below. The only effect this produced was a louder tapping on the drawing-room ceiling in answer.

The sounds at length ceased below; two young curates of S. Cyprian's were heard stumbling upstairs in the dark to their room on the top floor, shortly after midnight, and then the house was silent, to remain so for the few hours which must yet elapse before the household should be awakened at 5 o'clock by the tolling of S. Cyprian's bell for the first celebration.

Bertha could not sleep that night, but it was joy and not fear that kept her awake. She felt as though she had taken a new lease of life; her days of humiliation must now be ended, her deliverer had come to rescue her from the living tomb in which her youth and strength were being so cruelly wasted; and when shortly after six the chimes of S. Cyprian's pealed forth to summon worshippers from far and near to assist at the early choral celebration, Bertha jumped out of bed and ran quickly to the church, which was already filled to overflowing.

Five hundred children were to sing Easter hymns, while the service was proceeding at the altar. All the sisters of charity were there, all the girls from S. Malachi's Refuge for the Penitent, and a large number of strangers who had come to hear the music, as well as a good percentage of the adult congregation of the church. The decorations were very handsome, and the service was very hearty. The children sang jubilantly, the banners waved triumphantly, as the long procession filed round the church, filling the fine old building with the smoke of incense.

Miss Amelia Tavernsy was nearly done for. She never forgot to be thankful she had worn her old bonnet, for as she lay prostrate on the floor, as the cross-bearer led the procession from the sacristy entrance down the north aisle, his iron-heeled boot gave her such a whack in the face, though quite accidentally, that she could not help shrieking "Oh-h-h!" instead of "Alleluia!"

Bertha was standing in the vestibule among a crowd of lookers-on, gazing up the nave at the brilliantly-lighted chancel. The organist essayed the well-known hymn she had sung so gloriously at Knaresbrook a year ago, and as he was playing the introduction she knew so well, she thought with sorrow upon her weakened voice, and contrasted herself this season with last, and the comparison was not complimentary to her present condition. But when she remembered her surprise and joy in meeting with him whom she was certain was her long-lost brother, her voice burst forth in all the strength and purity of old. Something seemed loosened in her throat, and many were the faces turned upon her in admiration, as she sang like a fresh, glad, young lark, on this fair Easter morning.

After a hurried breakfast, and barely time for dressing, a carriage arrived to take her and Signor Vulpi to the Sacred Heart, where no sooner had the priest intoned *Vidi aquam* than the voice of her companion pealed forth in precisely the tones which had so mysteriously filled the church, now nearly a year ago. Every eye was turned to the organ-gallery, to see the new and marvellous tenor. Now surely the mystery was solved; this Signor Vulpi had hidden himself away last May, and had now come forth to receive the homage of the delighted multitude.

The *Asperges* ended, and the *Introit* sung, the organ commenced the opening strains of the *Kyrie* from Mozart's "Twelfth Mass." In this, Bertha and Signor Vulpi sang together, and their voices sounded just as did the sweet and mystic voices of the previous year. Bertha sang quite as well as she had ever sung, when she startled all London with her inimitable rendering of "Lucia" at Covent Garden. The presence of this new tenor must have restored to her everything that she had lost, and when the service ended, many were the carriage folk, ladies and lords of high degree, who waited at the gallery staircase just to press Bertha's hands,

and praise God for the recovery of her almost superhuman voice.

Signor Vulpi viewed everybody critically, smiled, like a gorgeous iceberg illumined with the solar rays, upon the fair and haughty ladies who told him his singing had charmed them so when he was an invisible a year ago. He was not astonished at their declaration, though he had never seen the church before, for Bertha had told him all about the unseen singer who had joined his voice with hers; and Victor Vulpi knew something of Psychology, and was not as ignorant as Bertha of Spirit-communion.

After dinner the brother and sister spent half-an-hour at Benediction, when they made a thousand hearts rejoice to hear them sing; and then strolling in the Park together, Bertha's brother related to her the mysterious story of his life.



## CHAPTER VII.

## A STRANGE STORY.

As Bertha and Signor Vulpi were strolling leisurely along on that Easter Sunday afternoon, talking as quickly as their tongues could go, upon everybody and everything, Bertha suddenly said to her companion :—

“ Now Signor, you remember your promise to me last evening, that you would devote a leisure hour this afternoon to telling me the story of your life. I do not wish to be inquisitive, and if I thought you were really no relative of mine I should not be so rude as to ask you to reveal to me any of your affairs. But I am certain you are my brother, and you are just as sure that I am your sister. I can read your eyes, and the glances you threw at my aunt last night I am not likely to forget in a hurry. And then her frightened expression when she recognised you, told a tale far more eloquently than most tales are told now-a-days. I do so long to know something of the dear little brother, who was taken from us when I was almost too little to remember much about him. But still, I remember a little golden, curly head, and bright, blue eyes, and such a clear complexion, and such bonnie limbs, that every one said he must be six at least, when he was only four. And then one day we went to look for him, and he was gone. We searched the ground for miles round, and mother employed men to search the river, to see if he had fallen into it and got drowned. We were all so fond of him, but we never knew how much we loved him until we lost him. And I am sure his loss made mother ill, for she died soon after he had gone. I was only three and-a-half when he was lost, and he was not much over five; and he was such a strong little fellow, he couldn’t have been kidnapped easily, and oh ! what a voice. He could scream as well as sing, and when he was only four he sang in an old church in the country where we were then living, and the choir-master told mother he would some day, unless he lost his voice by an accident, be one of the greatest singers the world had ever known.

"Mrs. Sweetgeese used to be with us a great deal at that time. She was mother's half-sister—that was all,—and she hated father, and said all sorts of horrid things about him, and made mother cry. And she used to whip my little brother, and then I used to cry, and she locked me up in a dark cupboard, and told mother I'd gone out to take tea at the nurse's mother's, where they were very fond of me and my brother too, and we often used to go with the old Nursey. I have always believed, since I got old enough to have any ideas on the matter, that Mrs. Sweetgeese had something to do with spiriting my brother away, as she and her sisters and a brother of theirs used to be always plotting something dreadful between them. And when these people come and stay for weeks and sometimes months at Silvern Terrace, I really can't be civil to them, though they do give me a half-crown once in a while."

While Bertha was speaking, Signor Vulpi's countenance shone with a gleam of triumphant recognition. He had now not only found his long-lost sister, over whom he had mourned bitterly when he was stolen from home fourteen years since, but he had also actually got beneath the roof of the woman who, with her accomplices, had led to his banishment from home and friends and kindred for all these years. Not that Victor had had a hard time of it by any means. No one could look upon him in all the glory of his opening manhood, a perfect Adonis in form and feature, without seeing plainly enough that his life lines had been laid in pleasant places. He was indeed one of the curled darlings of fortune. Emperors and Empresses had listened to him with delight, and sent him roulades and bonbons, when he was the idol of the Neapolitans, and had sung, as though he were an angel, many and many a time in the grand old Cathedral at Naples : in Rome, in Milan, in Cologne, in Paris, his voice had been heard a hundred times when, as a boy in snowy surplice, he had reminded the crowds of worshippers and sightseers of one of Raphael's angels.

No fault had he to find to-day with the "cold, hard world." He had never experienced its cold or felt its hardness. Born to rule, with an indomitable courage, and almost superhuman strength of will, endowed with marvellous attractions of mind and voice and body,—he had carried all before him. And now the gay world of London, and the yet gayer world of

Paris, was prepared to fall and worship at his shrine. The diamonds and the rubies which glistened on his fingers and shimmered at his breast would almost have purchased a king's ransom. Men and women and children adored him, but from all he turned with the frigidity of an iceberg, and the impassivity of a statue. And yet he had passions, rage and vengeance within him, which burned like the slumbering fires within the flaming heart of Etna or Vesuvius. He was an Italian in all his feelings and habits. Had he not been reared from childhood on the fertile plains of Southern Europe; had he not learned the meaning early, of the terrible and mystic word "vendetta," and did he not, even though he dwelt in peaceful Anglia, now carry a stiletto concealed in his raiment, while it was his custom never to retire to rest without a loaded pistol within his reach. A very terrible young man was this Apollo, in whom Bertha recognised her long-lost brother. She was apt at reading character. He and she had read each other's very souls the instant their eyes had met. But love and peace were between them, and always would be so long as breath remained in both their bodies. Unions of blood are not always, it is to be feared, heart unions; but between these two some subtle bond of spiritual agreement must always have existed, and the moment their eyes had met they knew that they were friends and kindred.

The ignorant and scoffing world may laugh as much as it pleases at what the immortal Goethe calls "elective affinity," but as between material particles chemists discover what science calls the film of attraction, the true philosopher seeking a definition of that subtle and all-potent force called sympathy, needs only to transport himself from realms of mud to realms of mind, and there between soul and soul will he discover that mysterious force, call it by what name we will, which joins in indissoluble union souls, who on the earth may or may not aforetime have met, but who know themselves to be parts of the same mysterious sphere of spiritual life, in which the embodied equally with disembodied spirits dwell. Those whom this power has bound no human laws or accidents can sever. They belong to each other, they understand each other naturally and instinctively, and no matter how fierce to strangers sometimes hearts thus bound may be, to each other they are always constant, always true. I do not speak with reference to fraternal or platonic, or conjugal love alone;

I speak concerning love itself, that love which permits of an historic Christ singling out a John as a beloved disciple, while all mankind were loved by him with an unfathomable tenderness. Inside the large circle of humanity, may not a smaller circle be discovered, and may not the members of this inner circle be souls whom God has ordained to dwell and work together throughout eternity, even though they may be sundered in time, yea, perhaps, through countless cycles of those periods the world calls ages.

But while we have given vent to our convictions with regard to true relationship, in this digression, we have kept our readers waiting with much anxiety, no doubt, to hear the particulars of Victor's strange and eventful life, as they fell from his own lips in fashionable Belgravia, as he and his newly-discovered sister were strolling together in the Park, near the Serpentine, on that memorable afternoon.

"Bertha," said Signor Vulpi, when she had finished speaking, "your words have supplied me with every hitherto lacking proof of my identity as your veritable long-lost brother. How well I remember the old home in Forest Glade! How well I remember the fair-haired little sister, who used to kiss me so often, and tell me she would die if I should die! She loved me even then, so dearly, and during all the years that have passed by since then, I have never forgotten the little face with the bright, blue eyes, so like my own, and yet so tender, while mine were ever bold and daring; and the little prayers she used to utter at our mother's side, when she never would say "Amen" until she had added; "And God bless my icky bubbler, and make him grow up big, good, happy man." Don't you remember your pronunciation of 'God' and 'little brother,' as I pronounced them? And my little sister's name was Bertha, and she would be a little more than seventeen now. She was less than two years my junior, and I was nineteen a few days ago.

"An I not a strapping fellow for my age? No one believes I'm not of age and over. I can beat the champion wrestlers of the day, and out-walk Percy Greengrass, who walked one hundred miles in one hundred half hours at the Alexandra a month ago, though I'm too self-indulgent to become a wrestler or a walkist; and I can earn my living by my voice, at any rate, and I don't need to use up all the cosmetics in the kingdom when I play in "Romeo." I'm

handsome enough without stage fixings, which are all right enough for bald and toothless old sinners, like most of the stars are now-a-days. Stars, indeed! I don't want to spend my time and fortune on astronomy, if stars are all made up of goose-grease and smut, and odds and ends of hair cut off the dead, who died of fevers in the slums; they are only satellites, and shine with borrowed splendour—borrowed from the unredeemed pledge-establishments, with a little of the hairdresser's and the tailor's, the milliner's and the dress-maker's art in the case of stars of the first magnitude. But I'm not content to be a star: I'm a sun, or I'm nothing. I play first fiddle, or I play not at all. I am *the* sovereign attraction, or I do not cross the boards. Now you, my pretty maid, and I can always shine together. Our lights will blend and offset, but never conflict with each other. And now you are happy with your darling 'bubber,' you'll have no more colds and hoarsenesses to keep you from the stage; and, mark my words, we'll have a fine, good time of it. Let the geese cackle all they will, we can sing louder than they can hiss—by Jove, we can!—and will, too, and that this very season."

"But, Vicky, darling, don't you know you're keeping me in an agony of suspense all this time, to know something of your wonderful adventures, and it's nearly 4.30 now, and we must be in to tea at 5; for vespers are at 7, and we have a long walk to church, unless your royal highness insists upon ordering out your carriage, in the person of a four-wheeler from the nearest cab-stand."

"Well, Bertha, dearest—now you are so anxious to know all about your little 'bubber,' who's now as big a fellow and as handsome as you'll meet in Rotten Row at 4 o'clock on a fine June afternoon—I will just rake together my scattered memories, and tell you how I fared since last you saw me; at least, I'll tell you a bit of my life history, but should I tell it all I'd have to talk till vespers had begun and ended on Easter night next year; for I've seen the world a bit since last we met, I can assure you.

"Well, of course you more than suspect that 'aunt' of ours was at the bottom of the whole affair, while those sisters, Mrs. Mouseby and Mrs. Whitelies, aided by their brother, Danhouse Hunheat, played an active though a secret part; you may rest assured, in my departure. Well, the long and the

short of it was this: I was a handsome, precocious little boy, with a very remarkable voice; and a gentleman who was devoted both to the Church and to the Opera took a great fancy to me, and offered Mrs. Sweetgeese £1,000 in cash and £100 a year as long as he lived, if she could only persuade our parents to let me go to Italy and live with him, and sing in the Cathedral and study for the Opera. You will remember Signor Dominico, of whom we were so fond, and to whom our mother was so much attached; that Mrs. Whitelies thought it necessary to tell our father that they were too much together for the safety of his honour, though he was a married man and lived most happily with his family. You will never know how these women plotted and planned to ruin our parents and cut us off without a shilling. Mrs. Sweetgeese hasn't a penny to which she can lay a rightful claim; the very bread she eats is purchased with our father's income and our mother's dower. Of course, neither mother nor father would hear of our going away from home, though they both admired Signor Dominico. Well, Mrs. Sweetgeese had got into a hard scrape. She had borrowed money of a man who would have exposed her within a month, if she hadn't satisfied him with £2,000 she got from Signor Dominico. So what did she do but copy carefully her half-sister's handwriting—and she could copy writing wonderfully well,—and sent a note which I now have in my pocket, which you shall read. Here is the letter which Signor Dominico received from that woman, with whom we both of us are now residing. He had gone back to Italy, and, of course, regarded it as genuine."

Bertha read as follows, with burning cheeks and flaming eyes, as her aunt's guilt was thus flagrantly exposed:—

"My dear Signor Dominico,—We are in great trouble about money matters. My husband's health is poor; and I must now implore you to take my child to live with you and educate. My loving sister, Mrs. Sweetgeese, tells me you offer him a good home and the best of education. You shall have him as soon as you see fit to send for him. I can trust him fully in your hands, though it breaks my heart to part with him.—Yours very gratefully,

"LORETTA LAGRYMAS."

"Firmly believing our mother wrote that letter, Signor Dominico sent his own brother and his wife, who were then

in London and about to return to Naples, to our pleasant home in Dorsetshire, and there on that sad day when I was carried off, your treacherous and designing aunt dressed herself in our mother's garments, assuming her voice and manner in case Signor Dominico might possibly himself arrive. Having given me some nasty stuff to drink, which put me into a sound sleep, from which I did not wake till several hours after she had imposed on these good people, who have often told me how my mother cried when she gave me up to them, but never till this day could I believe that mother ever gave me up. No! neither does Signor Dominico now, for hearing that Senora Lagrymas was dead, and that she had died of a broken heart, brought on by the cruelty of her half-sisters as much as from any other cause, he sought our father, who, when he read the letter, denounced it as a criminal imposture. He as well as our mother had never for a moment believed, said he, that any one in the family had the least idea of where I was. And then he summoned Mrs. Sweetgeese, and she and Dominico met, and our father cursed her, so he says, and had a lawsuit with her. But she won the day, and swore away our mother's faith and love in court, and all for the money which, had she acted honourably, Dominico would willingly have given her."

"But how is it that I knew nothing of all this?" said Bertha, excitedly. "I was at home then."

"No, you were not; and when you were summoned home it was to your father's bedside. The lawsuit had gone against him. Your aunt had sued him and Dominico for defamation of character. She had triumphed, and when our father died you were body and soul in her clutches. But her day of reckoning has come now. She will sting us; she will swear that we are no relations; she will gather her accomplices about her, and threaten us with lawsuits, and possibly with transportation or imprisonment; and nothing can now be gained. Our parents are out of this world's strife. The money has long ago been spent, and Signor Dominico and I have had a fuss, and we no longer correspond. But you shall find in me a saviour. You shall no longer suffer the penalty due to her transgression. At any rate, from this hour you are free of her, for you are mine, not hers; and my love and strength shall protect you as long as breath dwells in my body!"

Poor Victor! Poor Bertha! how little could they read the dark, mysterious future. Another trial was yet to come to Bertha—darker, crueler than all the sorrows of her childhood days; but not yet: for two short years at least she might enjoy some happiness, and through it be prepared for great and mighty efforts in the field of human progress.

The brother and sister returned to the house to tea. There sat the simpering Mrs. Sweetgeese; opposite to her the cynical churchwarden Catseyes; the Tavernsbyes were there, the Markwicks, and the Spencers, the Skinners and the Joneses, all in their Easter bravery, and the meal was hurried through with, that all should be in time for evensong or vespers, as the crush at all their churches was frightful on Easter Sunday evening.

Bertha and her brother drove together to the Sacred Heart. Mrs. Sweetgeese and Mr. Catseyes and two of the Misses Tavernsby went together to S. Cyprian's. Some went to the church of the Holy Penitent, to see the flowers and listen to the burning eloquence of Father Mountmoriah. One went to the Synagogue, where the Jews were about to celebrate the Passover, which this year was at the same time as the Christian Easter.

The Sacred Heart was crowded to suffocation. Bertha's rendering of *Hæc Dies* was so marvellous at vespers, that the choir director insisted upon her repeating it as a substitute for the English hymn, which was usually sung after the sermon, while the candles were being lighted and the priests were changing their vestments for Benediction.

Bertha and Signor Vulpì were the talk of everybody who listened to their voices—they were so much alike. Of course the story of their relationship was the true one, said the good Catholics, when the tale was told to them; but there were scandal-mongers at S. Cyprian's, who were even then predicting Bertha's ruin; and utterly refusing credence to her true life story, when they heard that she had found her long-lost brother; not that they really believed her guilty of falsehood or any wrong, but the Sweetgeeses and the Whitelies had personal interests at stake, and the worm must needs blast the floweret and corrupt the fruit, or how would it sustain its own existence.

Perhaps the world is, after all, consummately selfish rather than vindictive, but supreme selfishness is itself assuredly so

black a sin, that it is the fruitful parent of hosts of abominations, even blacker than itself. The corroding moth must devour the beauteous and expensive fur, or how will it find nests wherein to lay its eggs and rear its brood. The world, moreover, is so angry at superiority to itself, so envious of genius to which it cannot attain, that it finds no end of satisfaction in establishing sewing circles and Dorcas societies, avowedly to help the poor, but really to lay flattering unction to its own breast, as it scandalizes innocence, while it sips its tea and thinks to atone for the sin of calumny, by holding a bazaar and devoting the proceeds to erecting a new spire for its cathedral.

Bertha's talent, indeed, lifted her to an altitude, whither the gossiping scandal-mongers could not soar.

The lark flew high in the heavens, and the cats that sought its destruction could climb no higher than the garden fence or into the boughs of the lowest trees; but woe to the lark, if tired of always soaring and always singing, and hungry with long flights, it stoops to earth, if only for a moment for a little rest and a little food; the cats are ever watchful—they sleep with their eyes open, and they are always on the alert to mercilessly rend the songster who flies within their grasp. The lark can sing and they cannot, and perhaps that is why the lark is so great a sinner in their eyes; but the lark is safer as a lark than though she were a cat; for the cats cannot soar, and they rend each other, while the bird may escape their talons and find refuge in the upper air.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## A MODERN MIRACLE.

FROM the day that Bertha met her brother, life was entirely changed for her at Silvern Terrace. Mrs. Sweetgeese might fret and fume as much as she pleased, the Tavernabys might shake their heads in holy horror, and declare that Bertha was rushing headlong to destruction, but the world of London was too mighty to be controlled by Mrs. Sweetgeese and her accomplices, and while many there were in fashionable circles who crowded to flatter Bertha and lay their offerings at her feet, who enjoyed the scandalous rumours which were set afloat, the young girl's voice was far too priceless a boon, both to operatic manager and choir director, for either to let the precious treasure slip through their grasp, if it could possibly be bound to them. Signor Vulpi, a thorough man of the world, intimately acquainted with all the ins and outs of theatre and concert management, was the very one to introduce his sister afresh to *la belle monde*. Everywhere courted and admired himself for his most marvellous abilities; gorgeously handsome in appearance, regal in his bearing, and without a peer upon either the lyric or dramatic stage, he was constantly engaged, and could readily insist on Bertha's assuming her position as leading lady whenever he assumed the title *rôle*. Together they made London ring, together they produced sensations which have never since been equalled.

Gentlemen of rank and fashion literally prostrated themselves before Bertha: she had twenty good offers of marriage in one week; but she seemed to care for no one but her brother, and nothing but her art. They were inseparable; she and he went everywhere together. She was his guardian angel, and he was hers; and let the tongues wag as tongues ever will, the young girl passed unscathed through the furnace of a glorious season of unabated and unprecedented triumphs. And when the month of August came, and London grew empty, and she and her brother, accompanied only by their

favourite dog, went down to Brighton for a few weeks' rest and recreation, a child in its mother's arms was not more free from guilt than was the sweet, young maiden who, the very picture of health, and always in the brightest spirits, was as an angel or a sunbeam. Wherever she wended her rejoicing way, she was happy and content. She had youth, beauty, health, friends, talent, fame, in short, all that her soul desired; and in those days of halcyon gladness, she all unknowingly was developing strength for hours of loneliness and pain, when the burden of her sorrow and her desolation would seem to her too heavy to be borne.

Perhaps the discipline of trial is needed in its sharpest forms for those who have a mighty mission to fulfil, but the history of the planet, at least, testifies to good coming out of evil, and to darkness yielding itself up unreservedly to light. And so from the far-back night of prehistoric ages, when first primeval man arranged the heathen mythos, up till this very hour, religious faith and symbols have dramatized the history of the soul, while they have told of earthly and solar revolutions, in fantastic tales, and the burden of every metaphor has been *Ex tenebris lucis*—out from the darkness springs the light.

One beautiful summer evening, near the end of August, Bertha and Victor had been singing at a concert in aid of some charity, beneath the vast Pavilion dome, and were returning home to their hotel near Cliftonville, along the Esplanade, when their attention was called to a poor sick lady in a bath-chair. She had been to the concert, hoping to get some relief, for she was passionately in love with music, and her illness had been brought on largely by distress of mind.

She had never been a powerful woman, and a recent heavy loss had induced a deep and settled melancholy, and reduced her bodily strength to a mere shadow. She had been to Cheltenham, Bath, Harrogate, Torquay, at the advice of various and eminent physicians, but all to no purpose. Having spent hundreds of pounds on doctors and removals, like the poor woman in the Gospel she grew nothing better, but rather the worse.

This evening, feeling rather stronger, she had been taken to the concert. The room had been crowded, the glare of the gas most dazzling, and under ordinary circumstances she

would have had to leave before the performance was half over ; but somehow the music had so rested her, the singers had so charmed her, that when at nearly 11 o'clock she had reluctantly left the hall, she felt quite equal to enjoy the warm night air, as wrapped in furs, and gazing with soulful eyes upon the moonlight on the waves, she seemed in some mysterious manner to be waiting for some remarkable phenomenon.

In a moment she was on the road, bruised and terribly shaken, for she had fallen heavily. The chair having come into collision with some obstacle, had suddenly overturned, depositing her faint and wounded on the curbstones. The chairman, having imbibed too freely in a neighbouring public house while the lady had been at the Pavilion, was powerless to render any help, and, indeed, his carelessness had been the immediate cause of the upset.

Bertha, naturally tender-hearted and impetuous, rushed immediately to the spot, while Signor Vulpi, who was not so enthusiastic, and never forgot his appearance or his dignity, followed her in his usual stately walk.

"O Victor ! do help her," literally shrieked Bertha, as she saw how blue the poor lady's lips had grown, and how livid her whole countenance became.

"Why, how can I help her ? you little vixen," answered Victor ; taking the poor lady in his arms and placing her on the nearest seat, as gently as though she were a baby and he were her natural protector.

A veritable tiger when aroused, though this young Hercules could be, he had the tenderness of a gentle woman when dealing with the wounded who looked up to him for succour, or who lay passive at his feet in mute agony, appealing to some strong hand to come and save them.

The chairman having by this time sufficiently recovered from the effects of gin himself, to be able to recommend a similar intoxicant to the unconscious woman, said, in his thick and guttural tones :—

"I'll get some brandy, sir. There's a public house just across the road."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," said Victor, sternly and decisively. "The brandy, or something like it you've gulped down in quarts this evening, has placed the lady where she is ; and I'm not quite such a fool as to give her more of what has already so nearly cost her her life."

"But she'll die, sir, if you don't let her have some. The world would be in its grave to-morrow if it wer'n't for sperrits, sir."

"Not the 'sperrits' you deal with. This lady wouldn't be insensible this minute, if it hadn't been for your guzzling; and remember from to-night, you old reprobate, that I or some one will watch you closely, and the next time you are drunk you'll have to sleep on a plank at the station-house. Mark my words if you don't; so be careful."

While this dialogue was being carried on between the speaker and the chairman, the former had been gently chafing the lady's hands between his own, and after continuing the operation for two or three minutes, he made mesmeric passes down her arms; and then placing one hand on her forehead and the other at the nape of her neck, he looked her full in the face, and with an authoritative voice commanded her to open her eyes and get up.

She did so, nimbly as a kitten, and very faltering had been her steps for many months before the accident.

"Why! where am I? Where have I been? And who are you? How came I here? and why are you taking hold of me? Have I been ill? I've had so sweet a dream! And, oh! how strong and well I feel. I've not felt like this for more than twenty years."

And the lady began to pour out her thanks to God, for having so miraculously restored her health and strength.

Little did she know the agency God had employed in restoring her health and vigour. She attended Octavius Chapel, in Northwalk Terrace, where the Rev. Dr. Wentworth thumped his pulpit and saturated his gown with perspiration, so great was his excitement, whenever he alluded to "the blasphemous pretensions of those who dare to say, that in these modern times we can hold communion with the world of spirits; when the lips of Lazarus were sealed, after Christ had restored him to life, and he had been four days a dweller in the world of spirits."

Mrs. Saltburn would have shrunk in horror from a spirit-medium; a magnetic healer would have been in her eyes an emissary of the Evil One. But here on the Brighton Esplanade, within ten minutes' easy walk of the chapel in which she worshipped, she had been raised to life by spirit-power, operating through the brain and hand of a fashionable

young worldling, for whom, according to her minister, eternal fire was most certainly in store.

Not knowing how or whence the blessed power had reached her, she thanked the gentleman and lady for their kind attentions, and recognising them as the singers with whom she had been so charmed that very evening, she gave them her card, and requested them to dine with her any evening except Wednesday (when she always went to chapel), at her sister's pleasant house in Brunswick Terrace.

Having accepted her invitation for the ensuing Friday, as she was bent in their direction or they in hers, they walked along and chatted pleasantly about the concert and the current topics of the day. The chairman, half-intoxicated still, had been dismissed, and Mrs. Saltburn, lightly touching Signor Vulpi's arm, walked home between him and Bertha, as she had not walked for many a year. Feeling that something eminently remarkable had occurred to her, she could not forbear asking her companions if they could offer any explanation of her sudden cure. She told them freely of her sufferings, her doctors, and the chronic nature of her ailment.

Victor being a practical psychologist, and having studied electrical therapeutics in Vienna, might have enlightened her a little on the subject of her cure, had he been so disposed, but deeming it best to say nothing, as he had no desire to practise as a healer—he much preferred the concert-room and stage to the physician's office—he simply dropped the remark that a fright oftener cures than kills; and so landing the regenerated woman at her door, and promising to keep their word and dine with her on Friday, the brother and sister took a stroll through Palmeira Square, as far as Western Road, and back through Brunswick Square, reached the Northwalk Hotel as the clock was striking midnight.

They to sleep soundly the sleep of the just, untroubled by any thoughts of haunting spirits or devils appearing in the form of angels of light; while poor Mrs. Saltburn, thoroughly imbued with Octavius Chapel theology, actually saw a spirit, and was afraid she had been in some miraculous way operated upon by the powers of evil. But she was cured, that was a fact, and when on the following Wednesday she walked to chapel without assistance, instead of being wheeled in a chair, she so astonished the pew-opener that she actually profaned the holy place by screaming:—

"Mercy me, ma'am! Is it you or your ghost I see?"

When the good woman heard with open-mouthed wonder the lady's narrative of how she was cured the previous evening, like all the others whose "science" or "religion," whichever it may be, teaches them to ignore everything which spiritual science and spiritual religion reveals, said:—

"Well, ma'am, frights does do wonders, and if you don't have a relapse you'll bless the day that chairman drove you home in liquor."

Dr. Wentworth preached that evening on "Elijah and the Ravens," and in unfolding the meaning of his text, he remarked upon God's care for all His people in every age, and almost admitted the reality of modern miracles.

So, when Friday evening came, and Signor Vulpi and Bertha took dinner, and spent the evening with Mrs. Saltburn, she was full of explanations of her own mysterious and sudden recovery.

"But," said she to Victor, "I have heard so much about Psychology, though I can't believe in it, that I really should be obliged to you to give me your experiences, if you have had any, connected with this singular subject. In short, sir, pardon my impertinence, are you a Mesmerist?—for I cannot dispossess myself of the belief that you had something to do with my recovery, as you were holding my hands and seemed to be rubbing my neck when I awoke from the faint; and my special curiosity has been aroused by a statement a lady made to me the other day, that her daughter was going into a rapid decline, and she is as certain as she is of her own existence, that you saved the girl's life by making magnetic passes over her."

"Well," said Signor Vulpi, "I confess to having studied Mesmerism somewhat, and I know I'm what they call a powerful operator, as I've put many people to sleep and made them do lots of amusing things when they couldn't help themselves; and if I have done you or the young lady you mention any good, I'm sure I'm very happy to know it, though I have no intention whatever of setting up as a physician, as I am quite contented with my position as an actor and a singer."

"Oh! Are you an actor?" said Mrs. Salburn, looking shocked. "Dr. Wentworth says that theatres are all under the devil's immediate patronage, and this dear young girl, your sister, I understand, you don't mean to tell me you let her

go on the stage? What do her parents say to it, may I inquire?"

"She has no parents in this life. I am her only natural guardian and protector. She has lived with an aunt who has shamefully abused her while I was abroad, until quite recently (I haven't been six months from Italy yet); but as to the theatre, we entirely disagree with Dr. Wentworth, for though there may be much evil unnecessarily mixed up with dramatic performances, yet plays and playhouses, in and of themselves, are no worse than drawing-room entertainments and private dinner parties. You can make harm of anything, even of church-going, if you so desire, as a church porch is sometimes a place of assignation; but so long as my sister is with me, she will take no harm at the theatre or anywhere else; and should I be taken from her, I have no more fear of her going wrong than I have of seeing black snow fall down from the clouds."

"Well, I hope she will be kept in safety, but human nature is very frail, and the devil is so active."

Mrs. Saltburn had no further time to continue her warnings against the life of an actress for a beautiful young woman, for a servant knocked hastily at the door, and effecting a hurried entrance, cried, appealing to Mrs. Saltburn:—

"Oh! do come up to the nursery at once, ma'am. Little Charlie has fell into the fire and burnt himself awful. His hands are nearly burnt off, and he won't let me touch him."

"Oh! Mr. Vulpé, would you mind coming up to see if you can do anything for the poor little fellow. His Mama is out, and I'm so helpless in case of illness."

"Come up, too, Bertha," said her brother, in an instant turning to his sister, and knowing at once what was needed to be done.

Poor little Charlie was screaming on the hearthrug, suffering tortures. His hands were so burnt that Mrs. Saltburn almost fainted when she saw them, and shrieked to the servant to go for the doctor. But Victor said—

"It's quite unnecessary."

So taking the suffering child upon his knee, and breathing heavily on the wounded hands, he directed Bertha to get some cambric. This he spat upon, and when it was sufficiently moistened with water he put in his mouth and then communicated to the fabric, he wrapped it firmly round both hands, undressed the child himself and put him to bed, and to sleep in a giffy.

## CHAPTER IX.

## “ANASTASIS,” OR THE RESURRECTION.

THE little boy with the burnt hands slept peacefully all that Friday night, and woke next morning refreshed and quite well. Not a scar nor the slightest trace of a burn was to be found on the little dimpled fingers, which were so sadly swollen and mis-shapen the night before.

Mrs. Saltburn was a woman who read her Bible. She never got up in the morning nor went to bed at night without perusing some portion of its contents, and when she read about the miraculous cures performed by Jesus and his immediate followers and successors, she often wondered why it was that the age of miracles had passed, when the Scriptures never predicted its passing away. She had had many conversations with her minister on the subject, and she was obliged to confess to herself that Dr. Wentworth gave her no consistent light on the subject at all. Fitful gleams of brightness she admitted he threw on the Sacred Record, but the light of his torch was very fitful, and seemed to reveal the contradictions and discrepancies in his theology, rather than anything else.

For instance, he told her that the Bible was throughout literally true, and that Jesus literally opened the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf, and the tongue of the dumb, and made the lame to walk uprightly ; and then he told her that we must understand that these things in our day referred to the spirit only. Thus he preached two directly opposing doctrines : one was that the miracles were to be understood literally, and that Jesus literally conferred his power upon his disciples that they might heal the sick as he had healed them ; the other, that in order to draw any useful lessons from the Gospels, we must apply every statement to the soul, and refer it to our need of a Saviour.

The Rev. Josephus Figtree, at the Countess of Huntfox's Chapel, was at that time delivering a course of Sunday evening sermons on “The Miracles as evidences of Chris-

tianity"; and though he was very earnest and very eloquent, he entirely failed to clear away Dr. Wentworth's inconsistencies, and so Mrs. Saltburn spent many uneasy hours in endeavouring to reconcile irreconcilable discrepancies. She even went so far as to attend the Unitarian Chapel, one Sunday evening at Bertha's urgent request, where she heard Dr. Frecklesby, a celebrated preacher from London, philosophize upon the Gospel, and inform his hearers that if the miracles were once literally performed, he knew of no reason why they might not be again, and if they were not taking place anywhere under any circumstances to-day, we might safely attach to them only a moral importance, and regard them in the letter as exaggerations of a bygone age, though they were no doubt originally intended to set forth the marvellous moral effectiveness of the work of some great Galilean reformer.

Now this idea seemed half sceptical and half Swedenborgian, and Dr. Wentworth classed Sceptics, Unitarians, Swedenborgians, and Spiritualists all together; for though there was classification among the damned, all unbelievers being tied up in the proper bundle of tares to which they belonged, every one who was an unbeliever, in Dr. Wentworth's sense of unbeliever, would assuredly be lost for ever—nay, tormented for ever, was the correct expression.

Mrs. Saltburn was very uneasy about Bertha and her brother; they were so blasphemously sceptical. They lent her Mr. Portland's sermons; and was not Mr. Portland the London heresiarch, who had been ignominiously cast out of the Established Church, for denying the Trinity and many other orthodox dogmas. Signor Vulpi's religious ideas were not religious at all, in Mrs. Saltburn's ears; they were sceptical, mystical, philosophic, but though Theistic, certainly they could not be called distinctively Christian; and Bertha shared these views—they were natural to her—and though she sang in a Catholic church, and enjoyed the music, the flowers, the vestments, the incense, the pictures, the statuary, the processions, &c., &c., she was a thorough little heretic—absolutely a rationalistic Freethinker, quite of the German type; but, like her brother, with all an Italian's passionate love of art, music, poetry, and, in a word, beauty, in whatever form it might appear to her.

She enjoyed listening to the burning eloquence of Father

Benedict, who sometimes preached in the great Music Hall in East Street, but while his monkish dress and glowing imagery fascinated her, she picked his sermons to pieces and dissected his theology piecemeal, until the dogmatic part of it lay in ruins at her feet. She could enjoy the ritualistic performances at S. Athanasius's, where services were performed four times daily, and sometimes eight times on festivals, but to her mind there was a something lacking in it all, as people went to the Eucharist at 8 o'clock and returned home at 9, to swear at their servants because an egg was not cooked sufficiently, or a piece of toast was burned, or a sausage cooked rather more than it ought to have been. She was, therefore, quite prepared for the new light which was so soon to break in upon her.

Bertha was one day summoned back to London very suddenly. She received a telegram announcing the dangerous illness of her aunt, who was compelled to take to her bed. She must therefore return home instantly to superintend the house. Her brother was obliged to go over to France for a few weeks, to fulfil an engagement he was under to sing at the opening of the Autumn season in Paris. He very reluctantly consented to let Bertha go back to London, but as she desired to return, and said she enjoyed being mistress of the house when her aunt was ill or away, he went up to town with her, and having engaged two excellent servants to divide the work between them, he started for the French metropolis after seeing Bertha comfortably ensconced as mistress (no longer drudge) at 14, Silvern Terrace.

The day after her brother's departure, she was walking in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden, when she was struck by some very large and conspicuous placards, announcing that Mrs. Lavinia Coral, from America, a "trance medium," would lecture under influence of her spirit-guides in the Royal Athenaeum, High Holborn, the following Sunday evening at 7 o'clock, when her subject would be, "The Advantages of Spiritualism to the present and future Life." It was also stated that she would deliver an original poem upon a subject to be chosen by the audience. This announcement was something so entirely new to Bertha, that she at once resolved to go next Sunday evening, and to go alone, as she saw she could get a good reserved seat for one shilling, by purchasing a ticket beforehand at a bookseller's, whose address was on

the placards. She went right off to the bookseller, and found him a polite and affable man, who kept a good-sized stationery shop in a main thoroughfare. So on the following Sunday evening, she asked the young lady who had supplied her place at the Sacred Heart during her stay in Brighton, to officiate that evening, as she had a very pressing engagement elsewhere.

It was a lovely evening in early autumn, and as she rode down Oxford Street in an open fly, she ruminated upon the possibilities of spirit-communion, and prayed earnestly that if it were possible for spirits to communicate with earth, that she might have an evidence of their power that very evening. And there in that London cab she solemnly vowed to consecrate her life, her talents, everything she was and had, to enlightening the world on the subject of immortality, if she received any evidence of spirit-power that evening.

The cab deposited her at the main entrance to the Athenæum, fully twenty minutes before the services commenced, so she had ample time to look about her, and take notes of the place and the people. In the stalls, immediately in front of her, sat her old friend Lady Armadale, accompanied this time by her husband, two nieces and a nephew. There, at a little distance from her ladyship, sat an intimate friend of several members of the Royal Family; men of science, doctors of medicine and divinity, barristers, solicitors, journalists; eminent representatives of all professions and trades were there in the reserved seats, while the remainder of the hall was crammed with a very respectable delegation from the middle and lower classes.

The organ commenced reverberating grandly through the hall, and leaning on the arm of Mr. Ayrton Thistle, of the Psychological Institute, in Red Lion Square, gracefully walked the fair speaker, whom two thousand people had gathered from all parts of London to hear.

Mrs. Lavinia Coral was at that time quite a young and very beautiful woman. Her golden ringlets hung in graceful clusters round her head, and fell charmingly on her perfectly symmetrical shoulders. Her face wore a rapt expression, as though she saw what others could not see. Her dress was of the richest black velvet, relieved by choicest, real Valenciennes lace. At her breast and in her hair she wore fresh white camellias: these were her only ornaments.

This beautiful woman was a widow. She had loved her husband dearly, and had had one dear, little curly-headed boy, who was now in spirit life, and whom she could see in spirit in her husband's arms, as she looked out into the space before her. No one looking at her could believe that she was other than pure and holy, as she was, though a newspaper wag, a scurrilous penny-a-liner, had endeavoured to sell the *Billinggate Dust-pan*, by attributing to her a few of the vices of the women with whom he associated, and by whom he judged the rest of womankind.

A hymn was given out, and sung heartily by the assembly, Bertha singing as lustily as though she were in her usual singing-pew in church, and delighting all around her, who wondered who the young lady might be who was alone, unattended at a large gathering.

The hymn ended, Mr. Thistle read from Ezekiel, the much-controverted chapter which gives us an account of dry bones rising up at the command of the spirits, and becoming a great multitude of living men and women. The organ played a selection from the "*Stabat Mater*," and then Mrs. Coral arose, and clasping her hands before her, with upturned eyes, pronounced a heart-touching invocation.

How poor and mean in Bertha's ears sounded the liturgies and litanies droned out by curates, after this fresh, beautiful effusion, which seemed in itself so perfect an aspiration and inspiration.

A second hymn was sung, and then the address, or, as it was correctly styled, oration, commenced. Such a flood of eloquence Bertha had never heard in all her life. Words flowed in rivers from the lips of this remarkable woman. They assumed a thousand charming shapes, as they vied with each other as to which should bear the palm, as they threw themselves into the most graphic forms, delineating the sublime realities of the immortal world. Not one was out of place, not one was an interpolation, not one could have been omitted without marring the beauty of the whole effect.

An hour glided by, during which Bertha was rapt as in a trance of ecstacy. The sweet, melodious accents died away; the lovely speaker resumed her seat amid thunderous applause, which, however, was instantly checked, as the lady's guides objected to such noisy demonstrations at a spiritual gathering. Another hymn was sung, and then the president requested

some members of the audience to send up subjects to be voted upon by all present ; stating that the one receiving a majority of votes by show of hands, would be taken by the speaker as the theme upon which the poem should be improvised.

The choice fell on "*Anastasis, or the Resurrection.*"

Instantly the lady rose, and from her lips a poem fell, which might have been the despair of Milton, Byron, Shelley, Burns, or any of the men whose poems live as their everlasting memorial. Some people who understood nothing of the art of versification, and many who were frightfully angry because Mrs. Coral as far excelled them every way as a star excels a tallow candle, pronounced their criticisms on Mrs. Coral's efforts, said she learnt them, and that parties in her audience were in collusion with her. Others compared her to the *improvvisorì* of Italy, and marvelled at her gift, but could not trace it to any spiritual source. While the envious, and the jealous, and the spiteful—who are always ready to pooh-pooh what is so far above their level, that they can no more appreciate it than blind people appreciate colour, or than deaf people distinguish sounds—in their superior wisdom called the poems "bosh" and "doggrell rhyme." But what wouldn't they have given could they only have written such "bosh," or composed such "doggrell ?"

Bertha being a sensitive, intelligent, mediumistic girl, ready and anxious to receive the light from whatever quarter it might come, had no theories or hypotheses to interpose between her spirit and the sunshine. She therefore went out of the hall "filled with the spirit," eagerly waiting for some sign or token which might convince her that the spirits had chosen her as one of those favoured instruments, who, like Mrs. Coral, might travel all over the civilized lands of earth, and lead the starving multitudes of famishing souls, who were nibbling away at the husks which had covered the wheat of the spirit in bygone centuries, to exchange this dry and un-nutritious fare for the living bread which, like heavenly manna, fell daily from the spirit spheres, and only wanted picking up and eating, that the hunger of the spirit might be appeased, and the inner man made strong to fulfil the tasks of life, in view of a glorious, useful, and progressive career hereafter. Mrs. Coral's words had met every need of Bertha's nature. They had burned like fire, not only into her brain, but even

into her heart. They had enlisted her affections and convinced her intellect, and from that moment she knew where to seek for that reconciliation between the reason and the emotions, which popular theology so utterly failed to supply.

Arriving home just as the boarders were all at supper, shortly after 9 o'clock, she told them about the beautiful woman she had heard lecture, and repeated sentence after sentence of the magnificent oration to which she had listened with such intense profit and delight, when a sudden burst of inspiration came upon her, and she poured out streams of poetry and prose, with all the grace and fire of some great Athenian orator of old. And then this untutored girl sat down and ate her supper, rubbing her eyes, and wondering what she had been saying or doing.

She had been in a spiritual trance; she had electrified her audience, many of whom knew positively that such eloquence, such improvisation, was utterly beyond her reach in her ordinary state. They were amazed, and great fear fell upon some of them. They dreaded this mysterious power, while yet they were captivated and fascinated by it; and until long after midnight did this suddenly-developed modern pythoness speak both prose and poetry, which, when compared with the best standard works extant, gained much and lost nothing by the contrast.

From that hour Bertha was an inspired teacher. She still sang, and sang divinely. She comprehended now the mystery attached to her song. Her mother spoke through her, and told how she had made her daughter sing at Knaresbrook, in church, and at the oratorio. She declared also that the mysterious tenor had been on earth her brother, and that he was constantly assisting Signor Vulpi, and that in this way might they account for the wondrous similarity between the voice of Victor and the unseen. She predicted for Bertha a marvellous career. She sketched in outline the chequered future which lay before her beloved and only daughter, but wisely and mercifully withheld the story of the bitter trials and grievous loss, which must form part of her daughter's preparation for a high and holy mission.

From this day forward, Bertha was even more a wonder than before. Every drawing-room opened to her; her lectures, her poems, her singing were the delight of all who heard her.

Her brother, on his return from Paris, gladly espoused the Spiritual Cause. He sympathized most heartily with his sister's gift, and every night, from 11.30 till 12.30, the brother and sister held a *séance* alone by themselves in an upper chamber. They were so much in harmony, that they formed a perfect circle without the introduction of any foreign element. What *séances* those were! What wonderful revelations of things past, present, and to come were given to these two, who held intercourse with the invisibles so regularly in the night watches.

Victor's gift of healing became so wonderfully developed, that ladies of rank and fashion would come to him and kneel at his feet, and offer him the most fabulous remuneration if he would go to their houses and heal their sick. And he did so, growing stronger and handsomer himself all the while. Perhaps he himself was somewhat proud and selfish; perhaps he cared for grandeur and display more than for aught besides; but be this as it may, he was a very angel of healing in the households into which he entered; and if he did receive material compensation, showered upon him with princely munificence by those whom he had rescued from the grave, the spiritual power which operated through him was so mighty and benign in its effects, that a princely ransom would have been but meagre offering for deliverance, not only from the jaws of death, which are not so dreadful to those who know that they will reach a happier state beyond death, but from the terrible burden of a life of constant, unalleviated pain.

One poor woman had a cancer in her breast. She had had three surgical operations performed by the best London physicians. Her strength was failing daily, her sufferings were constant and terrific, and she grew rapidly worse under the best medical and surgical treatment her friends could possibly obtain for her. She was a widow, with an only child dependent on her for everything. Hearing of Signor Vulpi, she went to him as the Syro-Phœnecian woman of old went to Jesus, believing that he alone could cure her. He and Bertha at that time had taken an elegant suite of apartments in the Hotel de Ville, in the Haymarket. The lady climbed the few stairs to the office, with faltering steps, and asked for suite seven on the grand floor. Arriving there, she was told that the Signor was to sing in "Semiramide" at

Covent Garden that evening, and that he would see and converse with no one, no matter how urgent their business, during the afternoons preceding his heaviest performances.

He was really in his bath at the time, and was, of course, quite invisible. Bertha was lying down also, as she had to sing that evening with her brother in "Semiramide." The little Italian boy, however, coaxed with half-a-crown, ran upstairs and told his master that a lady who was dying wanted him to cure her, and that she was in the drawing-room, and wouldn't go away. So ordering the boy to fetch him a thin merino undershirt, he put it on, and kept it on him for five minutes, and then breathed heavily upon it, and wrapped it in a piece of paper which he held between his hands, to convey into it his magnetism; giving the boy directions to tell the lady, immediately she went home, to throw away all the doctor's medicine, to take a warm bath, and put on this undershirt, and call at the hotel without having removed it, at 2.30 the following afternoon. The lady went away astonished, and somewhat piqued and disappointed at not being able to have an interview with the mysterious healer.

Next day at 2.30 she expected surely to see the singular young man, if only to express her gratitude and wonder at the help she had received already; for from the very moment the shirt had touched her skin, her pains began to subside. She had slept soundly all night, without one of those debilitating sleeping draughts she had been obliged to have regular recourse to for many months past. But the Signor was again invisible, and this time she was waited upon by a female servant, who conducted her to a dressing-room in which a large bath-tub stood, and where there was also a blazing fire.

"Signor Vulpì requests you to get into this bath, when you have undressed, and orders you to burn the shirt he gave you yesterday. Whilst you are taking your bath, he will prepare another for you to wear till to-morrow."

The lady obeyed, though she felt annoyed at Victor's repeated refusals to see her.

Ten consecutive days she came, and took the bath and burnt the shirt and put on the fresh one, till her insatiable curiosity to see her benefactor could no longer be repressed. So asking the attendant where Signor Vulpì sang, she sold

her a half-guinea ticket for the Opera, "Faust," in which Signor Vulpi was to take the part of *Mephistophiles*, on the following evening. She had so much improved in health and strength during the past ten days, that she felt quite equal to an evening's dissipation. But what was her surprise when she saw her benefactor in the rôle of Satan? Of course, he was so completely transformed, that she went away without the remotest idea of what he was really like. Certainly his voice was wonderful; that he was tall and strong and beautifully formed she could see at a glance; but it did seem rather awful to go to the theatre, and see her invisible physician playing the part of the great enemy of souls.

Bertha, in *Marguerita*, entranced her. She longed to embrace the fairy creature, and, if she was motherless, give her a home with her; but from this satanic brother she felt rather a shrinking away in fear, and was positively afraid to put on the shirt he gave her when she called at the hotel next morning. But she was improving and gaining strength so rapidly, that she dared not risk the consequences of disobedience to his satanic majesty's commands.

Three weeks elapsed, and then she saw her physician. It was at a grand evening, operatic concert, among the leading *artistes* of the day. He was to sing *Cujus Animam*, an *aria* from "Faust," and, his greatest geni of all, *Incar-natus*, from Mozart's "Twelfth Mass."

Several of the *artistes* had appeared and left the stage, and then the celebrated tenor made his *début*, a handsomer young man the Greeks never imagined, when they gave Adonis and Apollos to the world of art. Mrs. Foghorn was captivated, entranced. This gorgeous swell, gleaming with diamonds worth at least several thousands of pounds, was, then, the mysterious, unseen being to whom she owed her rapid and now almost perfect recovery; and as she listened to his voice, and gazed upon the many lights and flowers which illumined and decked the ample stage, it really seemed to her as though the angels came to earth as truly as when they spake with the patriarchs of old, or showed themselves to faithful, weeping women on the morning of the resurrection.

And who, that has read the Bible, has failed to remark that the angels in olden time appeared frequently as young men? The illusion was perfect. Mrs. Foghorn now began to understand the secret of her cure. She little guessed that

while the young man in question was only an ordinary human being, so far as virtues went, that he was to a large extent, unknown to himself, the agent of powers invisible, who operated through his powerful will and magnificent *physique*, upon the debilitated frames of many suffering creatures, who flew for relief where they heard that others had obtained it, too weak and ill to question anything so long as they received benefit.

Mrs. Foghorn went again and again to the hotel, but never saw the Signor until the day when she announced her complete recovery. Not a vestige of the disease remained upon her skin or in her system. Her flesh had become whole and white again, as the flesh of a little child.

This modern miracle was but one out of hundreds performed by Signor Vulpì, under spiritual influence. Whenever his patients were afflicted with disagreeable or infectious disorders, he never set his eyes upon them until they were completely cured. He, therefore, avoided all that painful contact with disease, which is not only so distressing to a sensitive person, but which often vitiates the healer, and causes a repugnance to the work of healing to arise in the minds of many.

Perhaps those who go among the sick and mingle closely with them, may be often the more sympathetic and humane. Signor Vulpì was no piece of moral perfection, no saint, no hermit, only a very strong, handsome, magnetic young man, possessed of mesmeric and mediumistic powers, equalled by very few, and surpassed by no one, whom we have ever met or of whom we have heard.

Let no reader of this narrative scoff at the idea of healing by a magnetized shirt, and then profess faith in the Christian New Testament, where we are told that handkerchiefs and aprons, from the bodies of apostles, were laid upon the sick, and they recovered. The science of spiritual and magnetic healing was studied in the early Church, and has never been entirely lost sight of in the Church of Rome. It has been reserved for the Protestant Reformation to so deform religion, that the very powers conferred by Christ upon his followers, should be regarded either as evidences of diabolism or imposture. Is it wonderful that we need a *renaissance* of religion in its purer forms to-day, and that to thwart the dogmatic Atheism and arrogant assumptions of utterly un-

spiritual parsons and ministers, the Spirit-world is opening up the mysteries of immortal life to a world of aching hearts and suffering frames, and that through the most improbable instrumentalities, the divine gift of healing is being again outpoured.

But in the case of Bertha's brother, some will object, that he was not a person who devoted himself to the service of God and man. Was he not a fashionable young man of the world, who cared immensely about his own appearance, creature comforts, and social standing? The answer to every objector is merely this: The powers celestial are far more ready to give than we are to receive. The angels of healing have to be positively kicked out, or they *will* come in and work through human channels for humanity's relief. They stand knocking at every door, and pushing against it with all their might, and only when patent locks and keys, and the most formidable and resistful of bars and bolts are employed, do the patient angels turn away in sadness, and mourn as Christ mourned over Jerusalem, because the world will not be blessed. A gay, handsome, arrogant, good natured, though fiery person may harbour no ill-will against a suffering world at large; may have no vested interest in medical monopoly; may have no aversion to the thought of angels, and no disinclination to do good, at least if it can be done without inconvenience to self. Such a caste of mind may not be of the most self-sacrificing type, nor the most zealous in the prosecution of a holy cause, but wherever bigotry and pig-headed obstinacy are absent, the supreme powers can overcome the rest. And thus the idol of the concert-room and lyric stage, the gifted and beautiful Adonis, was used by angels just as truly as was his apparently more spiritual sister.

We must leave them here for awhile; continuing their united work of singing and healing, acting and teaching, and follow the thread of their strange and wonderful experiences into the realm of experimental research in the direction of those singular and much-abused physical manifestations, which, though often sullied, have been the means of convincing multitudes of the realities hereafter.

## CHAPTER X.

## AN EVENING WITH THE SPIRITS.

ONE evening, a few weeks after Bertha's mediumistic powers had so suddenly and singularly developed, through the lecture of Mrs. Lavinia Coral, Lady Armadale had said to Bertha :—

“ Now, my dear, when you were paying me a visit a year ago, I scarcely dared to mention to you our belief in Spiritualism : indeed, I may say, our knowledge of its truths. Perhaps you may have heard denunciations of its claims by partisans and bigots, and you may have read the utter nonsense which sometimes finds its way into popular prints ; but I and several of my friends have for many years past investigated thoroughly in our own house. The late and much revered Professor Gregorius was an earnest advocate of Spiritualism, and his widow to-day is an avowed upholder of its truths. Indeed, I may say that the really eminent people of our day never think of denouncing us ; they leave that for the wags to do. Huskly is an Agnostic, I suppose ; Vestly, and Tinnail take about the same ground. The Dietetic Society has pronounced in favour of us. Wallhouse and Croope, and Vertshume—oh ! and a host of other grandees in the scientific world, have said plainly, and in print, for that matter, that we've hit the right nail on the head. Gasbag, in the United States, never went to a *sdance* in his life, where anything took place, and he said we were all fools and idiots ; but when the lunatic committees sent in their reports, they found the Hell-fire Association had done far more in a month than we had in twenty years to fill the asylums. And, talking about America, why, roundly speaking, everybody's a Spiritualist over there ; at least, everybody worth knowing. The editor of the London *Inquisitor*, professing to be a liberal-minded man, made himself the laughing-stock of the country the other day by telling his readers they ought to cut everybody who pre-

tended to be a medium. I know I cut off my five-pence a week to the *Inquisitor*, and so did a lot more of my friends, pretty sharp ; and we now take the *Two-edged Pruning-knife*, which is only three-halfpence, and has got five times as much matter in it worth reading. So the inquisitorial editor pulled the wool off his own head by his uppishness. I must say I have no disrespect for Unitarianism. I never heard a man in my life in the pulpit I liked so well as Rev. Jacobus Martindale, and when he preached at Portman Street Little, I used to go as regularly as the clock at 11.15 on a Sunday morning. But some of the Unitarians are muffs, and the editor of the *Inquisitor* is one of the thickest-bided rhinoceroses I ever met in all my born days."

Lady Armadale, as the reader will gather, was one of those ladies who knew she had a title and position, and thus could speak her mind freely, without fearing ostracism from polite society, by reason of her blunt heterodoxy. The tirade against the *Inquisitor* would probably never have been poured into Bertha's ears, had she not just been dining with a Unitarian, who put the editor almost as high as the Catholics put the Pope ; and Lady Armadale was as true to the essential principles of Free Religion as she was to her own dearly-beloved and much-abused Spiritualism, which she so enthusiastically defended whenever a good opportunity was presented. But she was neither a fanatic nor a bore. She knew when to keep silence and when to speak, and though, perhaps, her besetting sin was rashness, or impetuosity, no one who had much dealing with her ever spoke of her as other than a very calm, clear, long-headed woman, when she was not excited ; and her excitement always abated whenever anything was on the *topas*, which needed her careful and deliberate action or judgment.

On this particular occasion she had just been to a most remarkable *séance* in Curzon Street, at the residence of Mrs. Euphemia Damocles. This lady, who was quite a leader in the fashionable world, had recently become interested in spirit phenomena, through the mediumship of Mr. Wilhelm Egbert, a young German, who had come to London partly for his health and partly to perfect himself in the English language.

Mr. Egbert was quite a young fellow, not over twenty ; not very tall, not very stout, not very anything. He was, in short, an every-day young man. He had brown hair, and

brown eyes, and a small moustache, and rather a sallow complexion. He was fairly educated, well-behaved, gentlemanly in his bearing, unpretending and evidently unsophisticated. This young man was living at Clapham, and had been invited to Grosvenor Square to spend a few days at Lady Armadale's, that she and her friends might have a thoroughly good opportunity of proving the genuineness of his mediumship; about which so much had been said, both in private conversation and through the Organs of the Movement, which had filled their columns week after week with glowing accounts of the stupendous marvels which took place nightly in his presence.

Lady Armadale objected to too frequent sittings; she knew that they impaired a medium's health. She also endeavoured to counteract the influence of monetary considerations, as they bore upon the exercise of spiritual gifts, as much as possible. She sincerely deprecated the atrocious practice of selling spirit phenomena, and knew full well how utterly impossible it is for mediums to command or promise phenomena, as so much depends upon conditions, with the nature of which even the most advanced investigators are still quite at sea. But Lady Armadale somehow or other always got surprising results in her little library, where the *séances* were always held. This room was not my lady's boudoir: it was her literary and spiritual sanctum, whither she would resort when she was in a studious frame of mind, or had important letters to write. She rarely threw it open except for very select and strictly private spiritual gatherings, and then about 9.30 p.m., after dinner was cleared away and the after-dinner chat was over, she and her few invited guests would retire into the privacy of this sanctum with the medium, whom she always invited to dinner, and treated as a friend of the family.

"One Sunday evening, she decided to have a very special *séance* with Mr. Egbert, at 10 o'clock. Her friends could go to church if they liked, at 7; she would of course not miss hearing Mrs. Coral, who was speaking for several consecutive Sundays in the Caveblock Rooms, in Moorhouse Street. She also desired Mrs. Coral's presence, but the lady in question, after her Sunday duties, was too tired to go anywhere except to a cup of coffee, and then to bed; so Bertha had not the pleasure of meeting as yet the lady whom she looked upon as the most marvellous and beautiful specimen of female humanity, it had ever been her privilege to hear and see.

Bertha had heard and read several of Mrs. Coral's trance addresses by this time, and each one made a more profound impression upon her than the last; so, with her own experiences in inspiration, she was quite prepared for some of the marvels she was to witness on that Sunday evening in Lady Armadale's library.

As it was a special festival at the Sacred Heart, Bertha was obliged to be at church till 9 o'clock that evening; and her brother had been also specially secured for the solemnities of the gorgeous feast. So about 9.30, Signor Vulpi and his sister arrived at Grosvenor Square, just after Lady Armadale's carriage had deposited her and two or three friends, whom she had discovered and invited at the Caveblock Rooms.

Mrs. Coral had been unusually eloquent and impressive that evening. She had thronged the hall with eager listeners for some time past, but never before had she seemed to take the audience quite so near to the gates of pearl, which lead to the golden streets. During her discourse she had been made to say, that the time had already come for wonders transcending those of days of yore, and that even that night, within gunshot of Westminster Abbey, events would transpire which would demonstrate the existence of the soul beyond the grave, as all the sermons preached within that venerable pile since its erection, one thousand years ago, had entirely failed to do.

Lady Armadale was on the tip-toe of expectation. Mr. Egbert had sat next her at the lecture, and though he appeared to sleep profoundly, she had detected a deep spiritual trance; and sometimes she had felt the invisible power pulling away at her as though she grasped the electrodes attached to a galvanic battery, whose strongest electrical current was pouring its force into her whole system. These were premonitions of an extra good *séance*.

Lady Bun, Lord Clarence Clyves, Hon. Mrs. Viceroy, Mr. and Mrs. Camomile, and Miss Straw were the only invited guests, besides Victor and Bertha. Refreshments were ready and waiting in the breakfast room: a light, cold collation, of the simplest and most delicious nature, served with *café au lait*, was thought the best repast for the occasion. Fruit and cake were plentiful, but there was no meat on the table; heavier food for those who desired it would be served at midnight, when the *séance* had ended.

Lady Bun was a pleasant, middle-aged lady, very well connected and very intellectual. Lord Clarence Clyves was a man of forty, or thereabouts, who had spent fifteen years in India, and had delved as deeply as circumstances permitted into Hindoo Theosophy. Hon. Mrs. Viceroy was a pleasant, affable little body, over sixty, who made you feel at home the moment you were in her presence. Mr. and Mrs. Camomile were irreproachable neighbours, but had never sat in a spirit circle before, though they had read the *Pruning-Knife*, and attended Mrs. Coral's lectures. Miss Straw was a writing medium, though a strict Swedenborgian, and a very precise maiden lady, not far off fifty.

Bertha was seated next the medium on one side, and Lady Armadale sat by him on the other. Victor and Bertha sang a duet charmingly, and then the influence which inspired the young lady caused her to offer a sublime invocation, then very softly and sweetly they all sang a hymn in unison : " Angels of Light." The medium was by this time deeply entranced and breathing heavily. Suddenly, with all hands upon the table, it rose at least three feet from the floor. All hands being upon it, the sitters had to get up out of their chairs. Signor Vulpi was as strong as a young elephant, and used all his force to keep the table down, but it still continued rising till it neared the ceiling ; all hands being kept upon it till the sitters had to stand upon their chairs to keep them upon it : then slowly descending as it rose, it again settled itself quietly on the floor. Then after the lapse of a minute or so, it began to tilt, swaying to and fro like a vessel in a storm, till five loud raps, heard somewhere upon or under it, announced the readiness of the operating spirits to converse with the sitters by means of the alphabet.

The first message was from a brother of the hostess, who often came to her and gave her valuable advice on business and domestic matters. The next was from a cousin of Lord Clyves', who had passed away in India, a young and beautiful woman to whom he had been engaged, and whom he would certainly have married had not death interposed. The tears coursed down his cheeks as the name was accurately spelt — a long, curious name — Isabella Claudine Monroe Clifford, a combination which it would have been highly improbable for the medium to hit upon. Then the Camomiles received tests which astounded them. Last of all, Bertha was

addressed, and that by a spirit professing to be an aunt. Bridget Hannah Maria Mary Anne Jane James was spelt out. Every one at the table thought the spirits were making fun with them, if the spirits had anything to do with such a string of names. Bertha certainly could recognise no such aunt, but the spirit persisted in declaring her identity and relationship. "I am your aunt," was spelt out again, "I went to spirit-life from Oxfield, in 1856, two years before you were born ; your mother and I were not friends ; look at the register when you get home, and you will find me there."

Bertha, knowing nothing whatever of such a peculiarly-named relative, could not suppress an audible smile, while the gentlemen at the table were literally convulsed with laughter. This seemed to annoy the spirit, and so the movements ceased, and the medium awoke feeling rather drowsy, but not much exhausted, as the circle had been harmonious.

It was by that time 11.30, but so anxious were the sitters to witness materialization, that the medium was implored, if not too tired, to sit behind the curtain and await such yet more startling evidences of spirit power, as might be given.

As materializations, or, as they were often called, form manifestations, had taken place oftener than seldom in that same room, Lady Armadale had arranged a curtain, so that a recess was formed, which answered as a cabinet or kind of laboratory for the spirits, in the seclusion and darkness of which they could make ready the appearances which were often shown at the aperture. Mr. Egbert was not very strong, and therefore it was thought advisable not to let him sit too long for these exhausting phenomena, which draw so heavily on a sensitive's vitality.

Signor Vulpi expressed a desire to sit next the curtains, as he was rather sceptical, and had, moreover, the opinion that if good, healthy magnetism was needed to assist the spirits, he would be sure to supply it. Mr. Egbert slightly demurred, as Victor was rather a formidable-looking person, and in these days of "spirit-grabbers," mediums cannot be too careful as to whom they allow to sit near them in a circle. Victor also expressed a desire to search the medium and the cabinet, if such a proceeding should receive the sanction of the medium and Lady Armadale.

At this her ladyship almost lost her temper, and said if Signor Vulpi wanted to strip people to see that they had no

masks and dresses under their clothes, he might do it in his own house, but he certainly should not in hers. However, if he wanted to go behind the curtains he could do so, and he might also go into the rooms behind, above, and below, to satisfy himself that there were no means of egress and ingress other than the one by which he entered.

Having rather taken offence at Lady Armadale's reproof, he was not in the best of humours when he seated himself by the cabinet, with a sort of "You can't cheat me" expression on his rather fierce though very handsome countenance. Bertha was sweetness itself, and did her best to pour oil upon the troubled waters, which she quickly succeeded in doing by passing under influence, and improvising a most charming little poem on three subjects suggested by persons in the room : one of which was the rather unpoetic topic of "humbug," growled out by her brother, much to Lady A.'s displeasure. However, the poem softened down all asperities, rounded away all angularities, and left the company in the best possible frame of mind to duly appreciate the evidence so soon to be presented to them.

Scarcely had Bertha's accents died away, when a soft, rustling noise was heard at the aperture, and instantly a beautiful little figure, gracefully draped in snowy robes, stood before the awe-struck and delighted spectators.

"Oh, my darling little cherub ! it *is* you, Gertie,"

Exclaimed Mrs. Camomile, as she darted from her seat, and would have seized the lovely little form in her caressing arms ; but Lady Armadale, knowing how dangerous it is to the medium for sitters to touch the forms without permission, gently held her back, and addressing the little form said,—

" May this lady touch you ? "

Three raps answered "Yes" from the cabinet, and Mrs. Camomile, with the tears streaming down her cheeks, softly touched the little head, and caressed the raven locks, and looked deeply and steadily into the hazel eyes, exclaiming :—

" Yes ! it is my child. There can be no deception here."

And then, falling down upon her knees, and kissing the little cheeks, and putting the little arms around her neck, she fervently thanked the great Framer of all nature and her laws, that so perfect a demonstration of life immortal had been vouchsafed to cheer her bereaved heart; for she had never been quite the happy woman again, she had been before her

only child, her little darling Gertie, had been called, at four years of age, to swell the ranks of the immortals.

Mr. Camomile came gently up, and touched the little head, and then the vision faded, and the form was gone.

Lights were called for, supper (though it was 1 a.m.) was freely partaken of by medium and sitters alike. Only Mrs. Camomile sat rapt and pensive, and as she walked home (only a few steps) leaning on her husband's arm, in the sweet, fresh, small hours of the morning, she vowed a vow, which in all her after life she sacredly kept, as our tale will prove as we proceed.



## CHAPTER XI.

## TESTAMENTIBUS.

AFTER the events recorded in our last chapter, our readers will no doubt be curious to know whether the seven-named aunt, who reported herself at Lady Armadale's table, was really any relative of Bertha's, or only one of those wandering influences who often perplex honest inquirers by the misleading nature of the poor results, which seem to be the best they are capable of accomplishing.

One fine morning, Bertha had gone out with her brother for a drive in an open carriage. They had not been out more than an hour, when the sky suddenly became overcast, and soon the rain descended in torrents, soaking the occupants of the open chariot, before they could hail a cab or reach any shelter.

When they got home, they were wet to the skin, and as it was a rainy, disagreeable November day, the wetting was very uncomfortable, and likely to produce serious results, unless a complete change in wearing apparel was immediately effected. Going upstairs into a large store-room at Silvern Terrace, where Bertha kept her trunks, and where a lot of old things were stored away, to fetch an old alpaca dress which she meant to put on, she accidentally caught sight of an old, brownish-yellow book which had fallen from a shelf in the cupboard. Picking it up, what was her astonishment to find the following inscription on the title:—"Bridget Hannah Maria Mary Anne Jane James, her book. The gift of her loving sister Charlotte, on her birthday, July 25, 1837."

Here then was proof positive of the existence of the mysterious seven-named aunt. Rushing downstairs with the book in her hand, she burst unceremoniously into her brother's room, where he was dressing, exclaiming:—

"What do you think I've found?"

"How can I tell, you little vixen; you're always hunting up some old rubbish, and wanting me to admire it, as though

it were some old relic from Herculaneum or Pompeii, or some other dust-hole over which people go mad now-a-days. I never had any desire to keep an old curioeity shop, and as to old china, give me the newest you can possibly buy, I say. What! that nasty, filthy old book. Take it away! I won't touch it! you know I hate nastiness. Never bring such an old piece of infection near me again, or I'll burn it quicker than you can cry, and that's quick enough when your old rubbish is assailed. Why! mercy, girl, what is it you want me to look at? Come and curl my hair for me, and throw that thing in the fire. The rain has made my hair as straight as a lamp-post, and straight hair I do abominate. I'd rather wear a wig any day, and have a bald head at once, than have my head covered with tow, like that Yankee fellow at the theatre, whose hair looks like a marriage between some old straw and a tallow candle."

"Do be quiet," shrieked Bertha, quite out of patience. "Your vanity and fussiness are enough to make a dog sick. Just leave your hair alone, can't you, and listen to me, or look at that book, and see if that don't confirm something we were told last Sunday night at Lady Armadale's.

Victor reluctantly allowed Bertha to hold the book under his eyes, while he read the long, curious combination of names, and then, "from her sister Charlotte."

"Why, that's the old dragonness, Sweetgeese, isn't it? Her name's Charlotte. Well, any way, if we can get hold of this sister we shall find out some of the family secrets, no mistake, and I must say I'm curious to know more about this Mrs. Sweetgeese, though I know more than is to her credit already. Let's have a sitting this afternoon, here in my room, where it's warm and cozy, and we can be to ourselves. We may hear something which it will be to our advantage to find out; and let's tackle the Sweetgeese at lunch, and see if she don't flame up like an infuriated rooster, when she finds you've got that book in your possession."

The luncheon bell rang shortly after, and the brother and sister, with fun and mischief sparkling in their eyes, took their seats at table.

Though Victor had a suite of rooms at the hotel, he still kept on his room at Silvern Terrace, and Bertha divided her time also between the two establishments.

The five Tavernsby's were at the table; the old lady in

a very dirty cap, and with her lank, mangey-looking curls fearfully draggled and straggling. Beatrice, Alicia, Amelia, and Mary had just come in through the rain; they were all governesses, and rigid old maids, ranging from thirty-five to forty-five years old. The two young curates of S. Cyprian's were dividing a quarter-of-a-pound of steak between them, as they considered it very religious to eat scarcely anything at the table, and then fill themselves with all they could get from the larder out of meal hours. Mr. Catseyes was there also, and not alone, for the Rev. As-it-were Cain,—the priest at the mission chapel of the Holy Penitent, which the eldest Miss Tavernsby attended regularly at 7 o'clock every morning, and at 8 o'clock every evening, no matter what the weather was,—who was with him, was rather a formidable person to encounter.

He had the countenance of stale poultry just before it becomes offensive. His manners were at once sneaking and imperious. His voice sounded like a fog-whistle, heard at a little distance from the ship to which it pertains; and whatever sanctity, chastity, &c., &c., he might pride himself upon, he certainly could not credit himself honestly with a good temper, and Signor Vulpis presence was to him what a red rag is to an angry bull, and he was in one of his very worst humours. He had been crossed at church. Anno Domini Wickstaff, his incumbent, who owned the mission over which he had sole charge, had found fault with the amount of candles which had been burned during the last quarter, and as Mr. Cain often went without butter on his bread, that the altar at the Holy Penitent might be more brilliantly illuminated, he had spoken his mind pretty freely to Mr. Wickstaff, and had accordingly entered upon a sharp discussion, which had aggravated his cough and given him a yet fiercer, and at the same time more emaciated, appearance than ordinary.

Everybody was out of sorts except Victor and Bertha. The soup was cold, and what made it worse, one of Amelia Tavernsby's front curls dropped into it as she was ladling it out at her end of the table. This in itself was a catastrophe, but, in the presence of As-it-were Cain, it was an affliction too heavy to be borne. He was her confessor, and he pronounced the wearing of false hair a sin; and her own hair was like a pig's, and she couldn't endure the thought of a

cap ; and she was sure he had seen her, as his little green eyes, like a wizened cat's, had stolen to the soup-dish immediately ; and then, as she had only two curls each side, the one which had dropped off was, of course, missed by everybody at the table.

Victor and Bertha declined soup rather decidedly, throwing a glance at Miss Tavernsby, which caused that lady to grind her teeth with such fury as threatened their falling down her throat.

The hash was a failure, indeed everything went wrong ; and to cap the climax, that impudent rascal, Victor, looked straight at Mrs. Sweetgeese, and addressed her thus :—

" I say, Charlotte, what about Bridget Hannah Maria Mary Anne Jane James, the loving sister to whom you gave the " Vicar of Wakefield," in July, 1837 ? "

Had a thunderbolt fallen at her feet, she could not have been more frightened. She clutched at the table-cloth, and tore it wildly in the vain endeavour to suppress her agitation. Had this ghost of a past sin come up to torture her in so unexpected a form, after the woman she had injured had lain peacefully in her grave for twenty years.

" Sir, leave my table, and leave my house. Never darken these doors again, sir, at your peril ! " hissed the infuriated woman between her closed lips, while her face became ashen and livid. " How dare you speak to me in such a manner ? You're not fit for the company of decent people."

" I say, old lady, not so fast, or we shall think you've been drinking again. You know I've seen you many a time on your knees at the wine closet, invoking such spirits as live in bottles. You'd better take care, or you'll have *delirium tremens*, and get taken to the madhouse some of these fine days. And as to leaving this room or this house, I shall leave it when I get ready, and not before, for you or anybody else. Perhaps I hold a trump card in my hand, you little guess of. You've played for high stakes, old lady, but the wheel of fortune may not always turn in your favour, and my advice to you, as a friend, you know, is, to beware how you irritate the dog that's got the scent of you, you wily old fox."

As-it-were Cain flew at Victor like a panther, and seized him by the throat, perhaps fancying he could squeeze the life out of him.

As easily as a horse's tail knocks off a fly which goads

the animal, Victor had sent Cain swimming into the middle of the room, with the not very respectful words to a priest in holy orders:—

“Paws off! Pompey.”

The Tavernsby's were outraged, and Catseyes, stepping forward to avenge the fallen clergyman, found himself suddenly precipitated into the fender among the fire-irons.

Bertha was in her glory, never had she admired her brother as she admired him now, as he stood, dauntless and defiant as a young Greek deity, ready to make short work of his furious but craven antagonists.

Victor was no pugilist; he never struck the first blow, indeed, he never condescended to fight. He rarely found any one whom he did not regard as too abject an inferior for him to meet on equal terms. He never kicked a cur when he was down, but if a little, snapping creature flew at his feet, and tried to bite his legs, he simply threw the creature from him, as the horse dismisses the flies which light upon his back.

The two men whom he had just knocked down, he looked upon as little, worrying parasites, utterly beneath his dignity to attack. They had attacked him, and he had thrown them from him. They might fret and fume, and demand apologies, and he would light a cigarette and apologize by blowing the smoke into their faces, and down their throats, for that matter, if they opened their mouths at him.

Such a character is not faultless, but there is something grand about it. The utter fearlessness and sense of superiority in all its movements, which marks the lion, has earned for it the title—"King of Beasts." The ferocity of the lion we may condemn, but we cannot help respecting it, while the cowardly, treacherous jackal inspires us only with contempt.

Poor Mrs. Sweetgeese was so overcome she fainted, and was carried to her own room by Mr. Cain and Mr. Catseyes, the Tavernsby's accompanying her and clustering round her, calling her "dear" and "darling," and a great many other pet names they applied to her, as compensation for the very reduced rate at which they obtained board, on the score of friendship.

But these poor women must not be harshly judged or quickly condemned for their fawning ways, which were so useful in eking out their scanty incomes, for they were really

very poorly paid for their toil as governesses, and the lot of a governess is not always an enviable one. Of course, on this particular occasion, they were effusive as usual, and abusive as they always were of Bertha, whom they feared and detested, whenever anything happened to Mrs. Sweetgeese:

If Mrs. Sweetgeese caught a cold from sitting in a draught or getting her feet wet, it was always laid to Bertha. She had purposely opened the window, or refused to warm her aunt's slippers. When she had a fit of indigestion after dinner, Bertha had been worrying her, or had been rude to her, and the "poor dear thing" was not strong enough to bear such cruel usage. When she fell down upon a piece of orange-peel, which some careless person had thrown upon the pavement, some years previous, Bertha was to blame because she had not escorted her aunt to early church. No matter what the calamity might be, Bertha was always the offender, the scape-goat upon which all the sins of the household were laid.

She used to cry over these unjust accusations, until her throat was sore and her eyes so dim she could scarcely see out of them, but since she had had her brother with her, she had grown quite indifferent to these unfounded charges, as he was her champion, her consoler, and the only one for whose opinion she really cared. If he ever spoke severely to her, her bosom would heave, her eyes fill with tears, and a lump rise in her throat as though she were choking; but he alone was master of all her emotions, he alone possessed the key to her heart, and so effectually did he use that key, that her heart opened and closed at his bidding; and it was best for her, poor child! that it should be so, for she thus found a centre of gravity, an ark of refuge, a solid rock upon which she could firmly plant her feet, and laugh at the breakers which assailed her.

In this particular instance, Bertha had done nothing and said nothing. If anyone was to blame for upsetting Mrs. Sweetgeese, it was Victor, and Victor only. But when, half-an-hour later, Catseyes and Cain walked arm-in-arm like two sour-visaged inquisitors into Bertha's presence, the priest and the churchwarden said in a breath to the astonished girl:—

"You have *killed* your aunt!"

"What! Is she dead?" screamed Bertha, her cheeks blanching, and her whole frame quivering.

"No, but she soon will be, if you don't mend your wicked ways, you reprobate daughter of a reprobate mother."

"How dare you?" hissed Bertha, turning upon them like a young tigress whose brood is threatened by the invader. "Speak another word against my mother, and I'll throttle both of you. Oh, you may stare at me with your ugly, green eyes, you old hypocrites, but I will kill the man who dares to invent lies about my mother."

The two men were somewhat silenced by this outburst, from so young and seemingly inoffensive a girl. They were, indeed, so completely nonplussed, that for two whole minutes they let the beautiful, young fury pour out upon them a perfect volley of unpalatable truths, to which they were compelled, however reluctantly, to listen.

Bertha had so singular a magnetic power over men, women, and children alike, that when she was thoroughly aroused, she could hold them spell-bound, fascinated. She was a born actress, and when her emotions were worked up to a sublime pitch of enthusiasm, even on the boards she would forget the footlights, the stage, the audience, everything except her part; and that she would act in such dead earnest, that not a pin could be dropped without breaking the awful stillness which enwrapped the spell-bound multitude, till the curtain began to fall, and then she would be brought again and again before it, and be literally pelted with the choicest of flowers, and sometimes even with jewellery and gold.

How long Bertha remained talking to Cain and Catseyes, she could never tell. It might have been minutes, it might have been hours. She was soon in a deep trance, and like a pythoness of old, she poured out secrets long since thought to have been buried in the abysses of the world's forgetfulness.

When she came to herself, she was lying on the sofa in her brother's arms. A little table stood beside her, on which were at least thirty sheets of writing paper, closely covered with fine, distinct handwriting, and signed "Lagrymas"; her mother's writing, perfect in every respect, true to the life in every detail, and oh! such a tale as those writings told, can better be imagined than recorded.

The whole history of the Sweetgeese fraud was written: all the details of the quarrel between the sisters and half-sisters were entered into, and Bertha was left with documentary evidence in her possession, enough to condemn her aunt to

imprisonment for life with penal servitude. But after a plain, unvarnished recital of the disgraceful facts, the words were written : "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord."

And then, what use would it have been to try the matter in an earthly Court? The testimony of a departed spirit, of course, would not be taken. Bertha's fortune had already been squandered ; there was nothing to recover. Her half-aunt had been deeply and disgracefully in debt ; her sisters had been in the same sorry plight, and, by dint of successful scheming, the money had all been appropriated and used up. So there was no cure for the evil : all that could be done was to grin and bear it. And Bertha, who had youth, health, talents, everything in her favour, was indeed richly dowered, though her fortune had been unjustly wrested from her.

The mystery was now cleared up. Bertha's mother had one sister, the lady with the seven names. Mrs. Sweetgeese and all the rest were only half-sisters. Bertha's mother's own sister died in a foreign land, and Senora Lagrymas knew not of it. When she died she left all her property, which was by no means inconsiderable (in trust for Bertha), to this sister, whom Mrs. Sweetgeese personated in the Courts, as she had got possession of every particle of the dead lady's wardrobe and effects, by an adroit move she made, aided by an accomplice who lived near this sister, and shared the plunder with Mrs. Sweetgeese at her death.

The quarrel between Senora Lagrymas and her sister, Bridget, arose through that woman being too honest not to incur the hatred of the step-family. She championed the cause of right, and thus incurred the severe displeasure of the usurpers, who attributed to her all their own infamies, and being many against one, succeeded in estranging her from all the other members of her family. So she died of a broken heart—the doctors called it an affection of the spine—two years before Bertha's birth. Thus her name had never been mentioned in the family since her departure from this vale of tears, and Bertha's father and mother had both departed this life, placing confidence in the vultures, and believing with sorrow that the innocent dove, who always strove to make peace in the family, was the guilty party.

After this strange narration, came glowing descriptions of the spirit-world. Senora Lagrymas and Bridget were toge-

ther in the immortal world, and Bertha's father, though not quite so bright a spirit, was being helped up by these, his kindly guardians ; so that he also was in a world of comparative bliss.

After these lengthy writings, Bertha was much exhausted, but lying passive in her brother's arms, she was soon completely restored, and was quite ready to preside at the 6 o'clock dinner, as Mrs. Sweetgeese, feigning illness, refused to leave her room. But she wished to see Bertha, so said the servant, who had just left her presence.

Bertha ran upstairs, little thinking how great a change was about to come into her life, and that almost immediately, as the result of that interview with her irascible relation.

Mrs. Sweetgeese was quite dressed, and reclining on a sofa by the fire, in her dressing-room, which opened out of her bed-room, and was a cozy, comfortable little room, though rather stuffy.

"Bertha, my dear," said the make-believe invalid; "I am not angry with *you*, and therefore I shall not find any fault with anything you have been doing, but as I shall certainly not lay myself open to a renewal of insults such as I have to-day received from that scoundrel, who may or may not be your brother, you must tell him from me, that he is to pack up his things and leave this house to-night, and that he must pay his board-bill for all the time he has been here, to you before he goes. If he does not go peaceably, I shall employ a constable, and he shall be forced to leave these premises. I give him till 9 o'clock to get ready, and no longer; and remember, Bertha, he never darkens my doors again."

"All right, Aunt. I'll tell him," said Bertha, quietly. "He can live at the hotel just as well as here. I daresay he'll make no objection, and indeed he said to me just now, that he had business to transact in Paris, and thought he had better take the night express this evening, as he had two telegrams requesting him to supply the place of a singer at the Grand Opera, who has been suddenly taken ill. But wouldn't it be better for me not to deliver your message under the circumstances, as you surely don't want a fuss, if you can get your own way without it ?"

"Bertha, you have received my orders. You have now only to obey them, or, upon your refusal, I shall procure the assistance of some one else. But I ask you to give the mes-

sage, because, if you choose, you can manage matters peaceably, and you know how I hate strife."

Bertha ran down stairs and told her brother, who only said :—

"All right, I'm going anyway. And a friend is going with me, a nice young lady, who will travel under my protection ; and who will sing in opera with me in Paris. They have written for me to go at once, and escort the new Prima Donna, whom they have already engaged, and whom I am to meet here in town this evening. No doubt you'll see her shortly, as she is sure to be here this evening."

"Oh, how I wish I were the young lady," sighed Bertha. "I do so want to go to Paris ; and you know, you promised to take me when you went next time. But then you are going unexpectedly, of course."

"Yes, quite unexpectedly, of course," repeated Victor rather mockingly, Bertha could scarcely help thinking.

However, she went up to her aunt, saying that her brother was going, as she had supposed, to Paris in a few hours, and that he would send a Post Office order for the money. He seemed quite unconcerned at Mrs. Sweetgeese's threatening and insulting message, which her niece delivered faithfully word for word. He only answered "Yes, yes," hurriedly, as though Mrs. Sweetgeese's verbiage were below his notice.

"I am going to the station with him, to see him off, and will come back directly in the cab that takes us to Victoria. The train leaves at 10 o'clock, and I shall be back by 10.30, at latest."

So saying, Bertha went about her task of serving dinner and hurrying away the dishes, to get to Benediction in the church at 7.30, where she sang every Thursday evening ; and on the way to church she called at a cab office, and ordered a carriage to be at 14, Silvern Terrace, punctually at 9.30, to take two persons to Victoria Station.

Coming back about 8.30, she was startled somewhat to find her room-door locked, and some one in it. She rapped, but no one answered, but descending the stairs she encountered a servant who said :—

"Signor Vulpi told me to tell you not to be surprised if your room were occupied on your return, as the young lady who is going with him to Paris might want to retire for an hour or so before the journey."

Going to her brother's room, she found that locked, and after knocking there received no answer. Not quite knowing what to make of it, but never questioning her brother's movements, she went into the dining room, and after waiting about five minutes, Victor joined her in his travelling suit.

"So the young lady is in my room dressing, is she?"

"Not that I know of," said her brother. "She hasn't come yet. We shall be late if she don't look sharp. I shan't wait for her though, as she will be at the station, surely, if she don't come here. I've reserved a first-class carriage, and told the porter, whom I know very well, to take care of a young lady if she ask for my carriage."

So they sat chatting till the fly drove up to the door. Bertha jumped in, without having occasion to go upstairs for anything, and as the cab rattled frightfully over the stones on its way to the terminus, there was little chance for conversation on the route.

They reached Victoria in ample time, Bertha telling the driver to be sure and wait, and Victor telling him he needn't wait, as there were always hundreds of cabs around the station.

Victor went to get tickets, and see after the luggage, of which there was a considerable quantity, and giving Bertha his umbrella, walking-stick, satchel, and a few papers, pointed her to the porter whom he knew, and asked her to get into the carriage with his property, and wait his joining her in a minute or so.

Nervously looking at her watch which, unknown to her, was rather slow, she waited till she thought her brother must be about to miss the train, and was just jumping out, when the guard came round to inspect the tickets and see that all the passengers were right, when a strong arm encircled her, and her brother deposited her on the seat, while the guard locked the door, the engine whistled, and the train was off.

"What have you done now," cried Bertha.

"What have I done? Why, I'm escorting the young lady who was to travel with me to Paris."

"I don't understand you. Where is she?"

"Why, by my side, of course, looking up at me as though I were a monster who'd kidnapped her."

"But what will my aunt say; she'll go mad."

"Let her then," interpolated Victor.

"And I've got no clothes; not a thing to wear. Oh! this is too bad of you. You had no right to deceive me," and the girl began to cry.

"You little simpleton! What are you crying for? You remember the locked rooms; well, I was in your room packing every mortal thing you could possibly want in Paris, in that big trunk of mine, which has been up in the store-room all these months. You'll have to make the best of it now, for the train connects with the boat at Dover, and we shall be in the French metropolis to-morrow morning. You can send a telegram at Dover to Mrs. Sweetgeese; at least, I'll send one to her for you, just telling her you're safe, and she needn't trouble about you. You didn't think I was going to be ordered out of the house as though I were an insolent scullery maid, without avenging myself in some way. I should have remained in London a week longer, and taken you openly, had it not been for her confounded insolence. But as it is, we shall just have a jolly week of sightseeing in Paris, before our engagement commences, which is not till a week from Monday; and as I'm not at all short of cash just now, I tell you, we'll enjoy ourselves."

So Bertha went to sleep, with all her clothes on, reclining on a covelvet ushion on one of the Channel steamers, that night to dream of all the wonders of the yet unexplored, gay Paris.



## CHAPTER XII.

## OUR HEROINE IN PARIS.

IN the grey dawn of a chill December morning, Bertha awoke to find herself in Calais. After the usual formalities attendant upon landing had been gone through with, she and her brother had a good breakfast at the restaurant on the landing stage, and then proceeded direct for Paris.

As it was yet very dusk, it was impossible to see very much from the carriage windows during the first few miles of their journey, but as soon as daylight fully broke, and the sun was well up in the heavens, Bertha was entranced at the novel spectacles which everywhere met her vision. French scenery is so different from English; and then the names upon the shops and signboards are so unfamiliar; everything looks so unnatural to a stranger who has never before been out of England.

To a lonely, unprotected stranger, whom painful business has summoned to a foreign land, the newness and unfamiliarity of everything which strikes the eye is painfully depressing, but to a young lady of eighteen, with a kind and highly accomplished brother at her side, with a thorough knowledge of the language and customs of the country, and plenty of money in his pocket, and a disposition to expend it in the purchase of every conceivable comfort, and even luxury either he or his companion may require, the sensations are by no means distressing.

A light snow had fallen during the night, just enough to give a fairy-like charm to the surrounding country. The ground was not covered with snow, it was lightly sprinkled with white flakes. The trees were just a little decorated with the soft, white sheen which sat so lightly and tremblingly upon their leafless branches. When the train stopped every once in a while to let passengers get on and off, and provide themselves with refreshments, if they needed them, Bertha was quite distracted with the jabber at the *gares* as she knew very little French, and could neither speak it nor

sing it fluently, though she sang in Italian more finely than in English. She was a star in Italian Opera, but scarcely competent to take any important part in any French Play, or even dialogue.

The train reached Paris about 1.30 p.m., just in time to enable the travellers to get a substantial lunch, and see a little of the city before dusk. Arriving at the *Gare du Nord*, Victor got a friend to whom he had telegraphed to meet them, to see after the luggage, and drove with Bertha direct to the splendid hotel, St. Lazare, to which place he had also telegraphed, so that a suite of rooms might be ready for their occupancy immediately on their arrival.

As money was no great object to Signor Vulpì, the proprietor knew his bird too well to put him to roost upon the roof, under the vain pretext so often resorted to by Continental hotel-keepers, that all the best rooms are occupied, and will be till the following day, when *les Anglais* can have some very good rooms on the first floor. But the following day never comes, or the rooms, if they become vacant, are let again, so that *les Anglais* pay the best price and occupy the worst rooms, unless they are rather more shrewd than *les Anglais* abroad are generally apt to be.

Englishmen are inclined to grumble at inconveniences, and put up with them, under protest. Not so professional singers, who have been reared in Italy. They will have the best the country affords, or let the country know the reason why, in very plain language indeed. And Victor was by no means an exception to the rule. He was certainly not a chronic grumbler, but he was a chronic autocrat, and wherever he went once, people knew him again.

The suite provided for the occupancy of these extraordinary young people, was one of the very best in the house. It consisted of a large *salon*, two very fine bed-rooms, a dressing-room, and private bath-room. It was not a "flat," by any means, but it was a perfect little house in itself, though without any kitchen or culinary apparatus. For this accommodation Victor paid 100 francs weekly: a mere trifle of something over £4 a-week; about 21 dollars, American money. Of course, this did not include board, or washing, or any extras, but many had been the English and Americans, Americans especially, who had paid 250 francs weekly for precisely the same accommodation.

Persons who are green enough to pay any attention to hotel tariffs, are unfit to travel without a keeper. You must always engage your rooms beforehand, and drive a bargain, and give the proprietor an idea that you may probably become a fixture on his premises, for the remainder of your natural life, and then you stand some chance of being well served, and getting the worth of your money.

Victor and Bertha found this rule hold good in Paris, anyway, and what with amber satin couches and easy chairs, and elegantly draped windows, and carpets in which their feet sank several inches every time they took a step, in their *salon*, they had a pretty good time of it, you may be sure.

After lunch, Victor took his sister to see the Madeleine, that most beautiful of all the modern churches in Paris. The altar-piece in this church, is one of the finest pieces of sculpture in the world. It is of pure, white marble, and though of enormous size, is all carved out of one solid block of marble.

It so happened that they arrived on a *fête* day : December 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The church was therefore profusely decorated, and the high altar was a perfect blaze of lights for the solemn Benediction, which is given at 4 o'clock on all festivals.

When this imposing ceremony was over, and they had walked round the church, and examined the many gorgeous altars, it became quite dark, so hailing a cab (cabs are very cheap and plentiful in Paris) they made their way to the Grand Restaurant, in Rue des Italiens, where they partook of the most delicious dinner Bertha had ever tasted. As they were neither of them fond of wine, they ordered *café au lait* instead of *vin ordinaire*.

Victor was wise enough to know that singers ruin their voice by taking stimulants, and though he was a high liver, and fond of delicacies of all kinds, no one could charge him justly with any leaning towards liquor. Indeed, he and his sister both disliked it, and thus they could abstain without any difficulty, and without any virtue or heroism on their part.

There being nothing very special at the opera or theatres that evening, and the day being so grand a *fête* day in the churches, they decided to spend the evening at S. Roche, where the music was to be *très exquisite*, and the procession the most magnificent of all the year.

The immense old edifice was thronged when they arrived, and such a bewildering confusion of ceremonies Bertha had never even imagined. The image of the Virgin was carried in procession three times around the spacious church. The two great organs played together in perfect harmony; three choirs of trained, picked voices chanted the solemn vespers; and after an impassioned sermon from the Curé, of which Bertha did not understand a word, so ignorant was she of French, the Benediction service was performed, in which both organs and a full orchestra assisted the crowd of singers, who poured forth their voices as only Continental chorusses can do.

Singing in France is not so good as in Italy, or in some parts of Germany; neither are the churches so gorgeous, or their ceremonies so imposing, as the farther south we travel, the greater the pomp do we find in connection with religion. But Bertha, who had never left England, had no idea of the magnificence of southern worship. To her, the Pro-Cathedral at South Kensington, where Monseigneur Capulet preached on Sunday evenings, was the *ne plus ultra* of religious grandeur. But S. Roche, in Paris, carried her beyond the clouds, till the roof of the building seemed to vanish, and the walls give way, and open up into some most splendid spiritual temple, where angels are ceaselessly performing acts of adoration, on a scale of grandeur utterly beyond the power of man on earth to faithfully depict.

Bertha was several times so strongly affected, that she was moved powerfully to tears, and at the Elevation of the Host, when the clear, sharp, ringing of the altar bell jarred upon her ears, as it broke the solemn stillness which reigned around—rendered more intense rather than broken by the soft, distant strains of music, which echoed from the chapel behind the high altar—she wept copiously. She could not tell why, but it seemed as though a hand of earth, cold and ruthless, had suddenly broken in upon the enchanted realm—her fairy paradise, in which she had dwelt for the last fifteen minutes, at least.

Her brother was almost inclined to be vexed with her. Surely she was not giving way to tears, as a hint to him that he had done her a wrong in bringing her to Paris. He let her be till the service was fully ended, and then, tapping her smartly on the shoulder, he said:—

“Come, come, Bertha, I cannot have these exhibitions.

What! Are you tired, or what's the matter? You surely cannot mean to tell me you're unhappy, or that you wish yourself back in England."

"No, no, not that. I'm very happy."

"You don't look much overcome with joy, with the tears raining down your cheeks in this fashion. Come, tell me what's the matter? You know there must be no secrets between us. Has anything gone wrong? Has anything displeased you?"

"Oh no! Everything is too lovely; and while the service was going on, I seemed as though I were in heaven. I was surrounded by bright angels, I couldn't see the church or the people or anything; and though I heard the music, it seemed mingled with the chanting of celestial voices. And then the altar bell aroused me from my reverie, and as it rang I felt as though some cold, dark hand tore me away from all the beauties of the heavenly state; and I shuddered, and couldn't help sobbing. It seemed like a foreshadowing of some coming disaster. These halcyon days, they cannot always last. I sometimes think the happiness I'm now enjoying is only a preparation for some dreadful sorrow, which soon will overtake me; and when I try to think, what that coming grief may be, I can only think of one real sorrow that could come to me, and that is, if anything should take you from me. Oh! Victor, never say again that anything you do for me can make me angry or give me pain. You are the only being in the boundless universe, whose smile I covet and whose frown I dread. You may think me wicked, if you will, but I do not think, having once known you, even God himself could give me joy in heaven if you were not by my side."

"My poor, dear, little sister! you must be very, very fond of me to be so sad, when you have only had a foolish dream, that some day you may be left without me. I know you were very miserable before I found you, but if I should go away this moment, and you should never see me again, you would be quite able to get along in the world with your present talents and experience; and besides, I am sure Lady Armadale would be only too glad to take you into her family, and give you a home as long as you wanted one. But you are tired with the journey, and had no proper rest last night, so let's get some nice cake and ices, and go right home to bed, and then to-morrow morning you will be quite yourself again,

and never trouble your foolish, little head about my leaving you; for such a thing will never, never happen, as long as breath remains in both our bodies; and supposing, which is not at all likely, that I should go to spirit-life: why, then, I'd be your guardian spirit!"

Somewhat comforted, though by no means fully satisfied with her brother's strong and kindly words, Bertha went back with him to their hotel; and after eating some of the proposed cakes and ices, they decided to try whether any French spirits would make themselves known at the table in the *salon*. So sitting down before the fire, with their finger-tips lightly touching the little table, they waited in the fire-light some few minutes for the approach of the invisibles.

The room was not magnetized by them, as yet, and both brother and sister felt a rather chilling sensation, though the room was hot, for some few minutes before the table commenced rocking. This phenomenon, of unusual chilliness in a warm but strange room, may be accounted for thus:—

"In order to move any material object, spirits need the force which is generated and dispersed by a person or persons of mediumistic temperament. In a room constantly occupied by powerful mediums, the atmosphere, the furniture, and indeed everything in the place, becomes charged, and after a while completely saturated, with this invisible but very powerful force, generated by the persons who impress everything with which they come in contact, with their own peculiar emanations. From this fact arose the ancient custom of setting apart temples for worship. Consecration or dedication among the ancients, was really magnetization, and however much the modern sceptic may sneer at magnetic and other influences, it is blasphemous, infatious in the extreme, to so libel the laws of nature as to allow that infection is communicable,—that contagious diseases can be communicated from one to the other by means of towels or sheets, or anything which has touched the person of a fever patient or one afflicted with small-pox,—and then deny that good and health-giving influences can be circulated, imparted, transferred from one body to another, in precisely similar ways. Let us devoutly and gratefully offer our thanks to the Author of the Laws of Being, that while He has allowed evil communications to corrupt good manners, He has also allowed virtuous communications to overcome the powers of darkness;

and that while suffering and pollution can be passed round from body to body in this terrestrial sphere of existence, that health and happiness are alike in circulation; and that good is ever the only Positive, the only Absolute, in all the universes which together form that boundless realm of existence, whose infinitude eludes the grasp of our poor, finite minds, and whose exhaustless resources may afford scope for even the employment of an ageless Deity."

At the expense of a digression, we have given in this place, word for word, a communication written through the hand of Bertha, on this her first evening in Paris. Her brother happened to remark :—

"How strange it is this table does not move, as tables usually do when we sit at them. Let's ask the spirits, if there be any here, for an explanation."

Immediately Bertha's eyes partly closed, and taking up the pencil on the table, she wrote in English, the communication we have just inserted here for the benefit of our readers, as we think it throws considerable light upon two or three rather vexed problems, and affords much food for suggestive thought and similar inquiry.

Following this suggestive and instructive message, eight or nine long messages were written in accurate and polished French, through Bertha's hand. She herself could not possibly translate them. The French was scholarly and idiomatic, and could only have been written by a Frenchman, who was highly educated and thoroughly used to writing and speaking in the most polite and perfectly grammatical style. Victor, who understood French well, had some difficulty in interpreting some parts of the involved sentences, in some of which technical terms were freely introduced.

These messages were very important, and threw a great amount of light upon some of the hardest problems of the age. When asked, who the intelligence might be, the answer came :—

"I could with readiness affix my signature, but I wish to appeal to your conscience and your judgment, and cause you to value truth because it is truth, and to know it because it appeals to your interior consciousness, and there meets with a response. Do not worship great names; do not be too inquisitive in your inquiries, because the adoration paid to empty titles, and the earthly names of celebrities, is occasion-

ing much confusion, and opening the door to much imposture. I will give you my name, when it will be of service to you to know it."

Following these striking and valuable words, came many other communications of a more private and personal character, one of which rather displeased Victor, as it ran as follows :—

" You were wrong in slipping off without your aunt's knowledge. She suffered much alarm on account of your absence ; and though she has not been just or kind to you, overcome evil with good : seek not retaliation."

This was characteristic of the moral tone of all the writings which were produced through Bertha's hand, at their usual sittings, and though Signor Vulpi laughed at such scrupulosity, the spirits still kept on their mountain-tops of rigid righteousness : happily for the orphan girl, who needed the strong hand of invisible guardians, to help her to steer clear of the many temptations to which she was exposed, but from all of which these holy spirits saved her.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## SOME MARVELS IN PSYCHOLOGY.

As may be imagined, from the events recorded in the last two chapters, considerable consternation reigned at Silvern Terrace when it was discovered that Bertha had "eloped" with her brother. She had certainly been innocent herself, but no one believed her innocent. Certainly none of the inmates of 14, Silvern Terrace, believed her so, and then one might as well be guilty in reality as adjudged guilty by the world, were it not for the monitor within, and our consciousness that some invisible powers take cognizance of all our doings, and will in their own good time bring every hidden deed to light, avenge the innocent, and condemn the wrong-doer.

The world does much to make men frail; it always looks upon the blackest side of every questionable transaction, and certainly appears to be as delighted when a brother, especially when a sister, falls, or even seems to fall, as angels are when one repenteth. But perhaps we err when we are too extremely pessimistic. Perhaps the hearts of men and women are not so desperately bad as their actions would lead us to imply. It may be that there is a secret sense of guilt and shame within the breasts of those who outwardly appear most dead to shame, and the remorse of a guilty conscience may induce a misery which loves company. And then, there is a feeling of safety in a crowd, which one never experiences alone, and so the Sweetgeeses, and the Tavernsbys, and the Catseyes, and the Onlys, may have consciences not wholly seared; their very censoriousness and readiness to condemn may be, after all, marks that they are not *totally* depraved. They may feel so humiliated sometimes with an overwhelmingly oppressive sense of their own short-comings, that the probity of other lives may be a lash which goads them well nigh to madness. And then, if one of the virtuous ones seems to fall, the mud which is cast upon the ermine robes

of a fairer sister, makes her dress more like their sable, and they take courage from the old Scripture asseveration : "There is none that doeth good, no not one ;" and thus they salve their wounded and outraged consciences, and their tea is more delicious, because the cake they eat with it is more highly seasoned than usual, with the spice of scandal.

10.30, 11 o'clock, 11.30 arrived, and no Bertha. What could have happened to her. Could she have met with an accident ? At first the emotions in the Sweetgeese household were those of fear rather than recrimination. Could she have returned, and gone to her room ? Could she have been rash enough to walk home ? Could she have met a friend ? A hundred conjectures were made, all more or less feasible and probable, till the clocks struck twelve, and then Mrs. Sweetgeese declared she should go mad.

Whenever she felt inclined to lose her reason, she always assisted it in its flight by pretty copious draughts of brandy, and on this particular occasion she drank till she was positively fuddled. For this the servant had reason to rejoice, as it kept her mistress quiet, and saved her from that incessant scolding and wrangling, which made it necessary for Mrs. Sweetgeese to be continually changing her domestics.

The housemaid, however, was sharper than her mistress; and though she was very fond of Bertha—for Bertha always took her part in the altercations with Mrs. Sweetgeese, and often stayed at home to let her out when Mrs. Sweetgeese had positively refused to allow her a single breath of air, or step of outdoor exercise,—she could not help thinking she had pretty accurately divined the cause of Bertha's absence. Had not Signor Vulpi been very dark and mysterious in his hints to her about some young lady who was to travel with him to Paris ? Had not Bertha come in from church at 8.30, and found the door of her room locked, and someone in it ; and yet no mysterious young lady had been seen to enter or leave the house ?

If Bertha were a party to the whole affair, and intended thus to quit the house in company with Victor, she must be a most accomplished actress. How well she feigned surprise, if it was feigned ; and why should she have gone straight up stairs to her room, when she returned from Benediction, if she had known that her brother was engaged in some mysterious transactions to which she was a party ?

The housemaid, wishing to satisfy her curiosity, though she cared very little for the anxiety of her most disagreeable and inconsiderate mistress, went quietly into Bertha's room, which was unlocked now. A fire burned low in the grate; the windows were closely curtained; the gas was turned half-way on, just as Bertha always left it, when she went out for the evening. Everything was lying about as usual. Her trunks were there, and locked; an old morning calico dress hung on the door, and an old hat she wore to market hung there also; various small articles—a comb, a brush, some writing materials, a needle-case, were on the dressing-table. Surely no girl, who meant to run away from home, would thus leave her effects behind her. But what was it that prompted the housemaid to try and open one of Bertha's trunks? She could not open it, neither could she lift it. The other boxes were just as heavy: Could they be so heavy with clothes? The drawers were all locked, but still the room offered no clue whatever to Bertha's whereabouts. Mystified, but yet certain in her own mind that Bertha had accompanied her brother, she went to bed.

Mrs. Sweetgeese slept little till morning, when having become thoroughly stupefied with frequent draughts of brandy, she slept long and heavily; so long that the telegraph boy had long since left a telegram for her, before she awoke to open it and read it.

The other inmates of the house enjoyed their task of scandalizing Bertha, over the breakfast-table. Of course, it being a *fête* day, and a Friday, the Tavernsbyes and the Cateeyes had been to early communion; but what of that? Surely, because people have been to church at 7 o'clock, and received the "blessed sacrament," it is no reason why they should not talk about the imagined, as well as the actual, delinquencies of their fellow-mortals.

If you put the question plainly to these "faithful" ones, they would, no doubt, assure you, that the "body and blood of their Divine Lord" stirred up within them a righteous indignation against wrong, and that they were only protesting against those iniquities, which, if unrepented of, would land those guilty of them in eternal woe. And we must always bear in mind that these poor, benighted Christians, fully as benighted as the untutored heathen—to whom they felt it to be their duty to send missionaries—worshipped a God of

wrath as well as a God of love, a God who sent a large percentage of his children to eternal fire, and thus they honoured one half of their complex deity by loving the elect, and honoured the other half by spiting the reprobate. And Bertha was, no doubt, a "vessel of wrath" by this time, fitted to destruction.

Modify and cloak the facts as you may, the infamous dogma of everlasting torment for all "who die out of Christ," is just so much burning fuel to add fresh vigour to the flame of man's inhumanity to man.

Breakfast over, and the Tavernsby's on their way to the various houses where they gave music and drawing lessons at one shilling an hour (oftener ninepence, sometimes sixpence), though their "terms" were two shillings-and-sixpence per hour, with a slight reduction for a lengthened period, Mrs. Sweetgeese was sufficiently recovering from her stupor to read the telegram, which was brought up to her with her breakfast, which, during the winter, she usually ate in bed. The message was very short, and not signed: "Bertha is safe;" that was all. Of course, it was easy to guess who and where it came from; but there was no proof positive of Bertha's whereabouts.

Bertha wrote a letter to her aunt, which never reached its destination, as her brother found it lying on the table among others which he posted, but after reading that addressed to Mrs. Sweetgeese, he coolly committed it to the flames, telling Bertha he had done so, as he did not intend that any conciliatory notes should reach that woman, if he could intercept them.

Our readers may blame him for the course he thought fit to pursue, but all must admit there were extenuating circumstances, as Mrs. Sweetgeese was a woman as utterly devoid of principle, as we can well imagine any apparently civilized person to be; and Bertha had certainly been, for years, most shamelessly swindled by this hypocrite, who pretended to care for her, only that she might the more readily defraud her of her dues, without awaking anyone's suspicion.

Poor Mrs. Sweetgeese! how she was fondled and caressed, and coaxed, and petted on account of Bertha's absence. But the shoe still pinched, and that very severely, in one very tender place. The house became a perfect scene of mutiny and insurrection, whenever Bertha indulged in any protracted

absence; for the servants liked their young mistress, while they detested their old one; and as Bertha treated servants as though they were sentient human beings, who could feel pleasure and pain, and might possibly get weary sometimes, and need a little recreation, she ruled the household by love, and warded off many an impending eruption; while her aunt, who strove to govern by fear only, and treated hirelings as though they were slaves or brute beasts, was openly defied, and left to manage without help as best she could.

Meanwhile, Bertha was having a very gay and happy time in Paris. The bright, fresh air agreed with her wonderfully, and covered her cheeks with fresh roses, which were the despair of the rouged Parisians who, with all their artifices, could not compete with youth, health, air, and exercise, in producing the bloom of youth. All Piver's cosmetics showed, when the light shone full upon them, but let the sun shine brightly as it would, the strongest light seemed to heighten rather than diminish the charm of Bertha's beauty.

Paris is not destitute of those who believe in the possibility of intercourse with spiritual beings. The works of Cedrak Nalla have been widely circulated and studied among all classes of society in Europe, and while these famous books contain many ideas not readily accepted by the bulk of British Spiritualists, they also contain a perfect mine of spiritual wisdom, which is constantly yielding golden ore to those who have brains to think and hearts to feel, whatever their opinions may be upon transmigration. Not only are the works of Cedrak Nalla, which contain multitudes of spiritual communications, widely read and circulated all over the Continent, but the fascinating science of Mesmerism, or Electro-biology, receives a great amount of practical, experimental, as well as theoretical, attention.

One evening, shortly after dusk, two gentlemen whom Signor Vulpi had met at a friend's house, called in to see him, and among other things their conversation turned upon Anton Mesmer and Baron von Reichenbach. A new work had also just been issued from the press, written by the Countess of Orkney, entitled "Psyche." This work dealt very largely with mesmeric phenomena. One of the gentlemen, Adolphe Fourier, was himself a powerful mesmerist; his friend, a German, Herr Gustavus Friedland, was an utter sceptic. He called all spiritual questions *agnoninimæ*, and considered

that everything that could be described by that utterly unintelligible, supposed-to-be-Latin word, beneath the dignity of a professor of Aquosity, at Heidelberg University.

To him, blue eyes were a mixture of soap and water.

"Windows of the soul, indeed! Bosh! there is no soul. Humbug, I say; rot, arrant nonsense!"

And the sandy-haired German, who smelt very strongly of garlic and execrable tobacco, which he was constantly smoking, to the accompaniment of lager beer in pewter mugs, had come to call upon Victor and his sister, with his "superstitious and rather cranky" friend, whom he pitied from the bottom of his utterly unfeeling heart; in order to completely overthrow the contemptible delusion to which that friend was an unhappy victim.

The two gentlemen had to wait some few minutes before Victor joined them, and as this young man was on his own premises, and was generally obeyed, no matter on whose premises he might for the moment stand, the German pretender, alias professor, was pretty well sat upon, when he endeavoured to convert Victor to the sublime faith of the scientific ignoramuses, whose loudest boast is that they know nothing, and that there is nothing to be known. Everything they do not know is Unknowable, spelt with a capital U, and thus, who are they? Only the lineal descendants of the men at Athens, to whom eighteen centuries ago the apostle Paul attempted to make a revelation. The "Unknown" is to-day the substitute for the "Unknown God" of former centuries, and while the worship of an Unknown God may be "too superstitious," yet the worship of any God at all, is an admission that there is something worthy of respect besides ourselves, somewhere in the universe. But this magnificent Unknown, by no means a God, whom the modern Agnonimists adore, is simply the supreme and loftiest ideal of these men's minds, ignorance—according to Socrates the synonym of Evil—Devil-worship: that is just the English of it.

Some such words as these fell rather fiercely and hotly from the lips of Victor, while the Heidelberg professor was making an ass of himself, awaiting Bertha, who soon joined them.

Very haughtily she drew herself up on entering the room, when Aquosity condescended to squeeze her hand in a vice-like grasp, in his large, sinewy palm.

"Excuse me, Sir, my flesh is not leather."

Said our heroine, rather sharply, when the sapphire ring which her brother gave her on that memorable Easter Sunday, when they first knew their true relations to each other, and which he told her always to wear, pierced her tender flesh in the coarse professor's grasp.

"Oh, I beg a thousand pardons, I'm sure, Fraulein Berta. You sensitives, or lucides, or whatever you are, are so easily disturbed. You are like Reichenbach's subjects, who saw odylic flames issuing from magnets; because there are no such flames, and you people who are called mediums, always see what there is not, and never see what there is. You are the *imaginati*, who fill the world with superstitions. Will your brother permit me to see you imagine something this evening?"

"Sir! if you continue to speak to my sister in that style much longer, I'll make short work of you, Professor Ignoramus Assinus. I can coin Latin as well as you," retorted Victor, sharply. "But as Mons. Fourier is my friend, a gentleman whom I respect,—and I can assure you I have no respect for such donkeys as yourself, and wonder at my friend keeping coming with such a blockhead,—I will allow my sister to pass into the magnetic sleep, and demonstrate truth to your confusion, right here in presence of my friend and yours."

"Very well; I'm ready to see anything. Trump up your spirits, if you have any."

Too disgusted with the leering vulgarity of this "professor," who had perhaps seen the outside of Heidelberg once in his life, to vouchsafe any further comments on his ungentlemanly speech and manners, Signor Vulpi placed his sister in a chair, facing due south. Standing immediately behind her, he made a few passes over her eyes, until they closed naturally, and then gently magnetizing her twice or thrice down the arms, he asked her to tell the strange gentlemen their names, which she did immediately, without the slightest hesitation, though she was entirely unacquainted with their given names, in her natural condition.

Victor then asked her to describe the room where the two visitors had dined the day before, and tell them what they had for dinner, and who partook of the meal with them. All these questions were accurately answered. But then, Victor could have answered them himself correctly, though his sister could not, and so this phenomenon was "thought transfer,"

and explains the process exactly whereby a controlling spirit can operate upon and through the brain of an entranced sensitive, who, in her normal state, is quite ignorant of the matter given through her when in trance.

Another experiment was then tried. Bertha was to all appearances sound asleep, breathing heavily and regularly, with her eyes firmly closed, and a beautiful smile irradiating her countenance. It is well known to those experienced with somnambulists, that in the somnambulic condition the features often wear a rapt and ecstatic expression, and so beautiful is this expression often, that skilful Continental artists learn how to magnetize their "models," that they may reproduce upon the canvas an ideal countenance, taken from real life, but far more lovely than waking faces usually are.

The two gentlemen could not help remarking upon Bertha's exceeding beauty, and upon the intense and yet reposeful happiness which lighted up her face, as she sat there entirely unconscious of all that was going on around her; and this fact alone was an evidence to the reality of her entrance-ment, and furnished the sitters with an additional proof of the genuineness of the phenomena. M. Fourier was delighted, the German unbent a little; as the sight of a very beautiful girl, with a lovely smile on her face, is apt to touch a soft spot in a masculine heart, even though man is only salt and water.

The next experiment was this: Messieurs Fourier and Friedland wrote words, sentences, names, anything on slips of paper, showing them to Victor, who had joined them, leaving Bertha at the extreme other end of the room, twenty feet away from them, at least. To make sure that she could not see the papers, the part of the room where she sat was thrown completely into shadow, and to make the test yet more severe, her brother securely bandaged her eyes, with a large handkerchief he took from his pocket.

All that he stood out against was, the proposition made by Friedland to bandage his sister's eyes, or to touch her in any way. This he strictly forbade, as he knew too well how murderous oftentimes are the ignorant or wilful efforts of persons whose influence is prejudicial to a sensitive, when they invade her sphere and thrust their jarring elements upon her when entranced. Victor allowed no one but himself to place hands on Bertha, and Bertha instinctively shrank from the

touch of all other persons, whenever she was about to be entranced, but the test was quite complete without resorting to anything dangerous or impertinent.

These slips of paper, which the gentlemen had written, contained the names of plants and animals, long, Latin, technical terms with which even Victor was quite unfamiliar. Immediately Victor's eyes rested on the paper, Bertha would pronounce the words exactly as they were spelt, every syllable correctly. No matter how long and intricate the sentences, or how bewildering the foreign names, she would read them all straight off, as though a book were before her eyes; but anything her brother did not clearly see, she stumbled over, and just where he stumbled as he read with his eye, she stumbled in pronunciation.

The German was mystified, but declared there must be some trick, some collusion which he could not discover. He pretended to believe that Victor was a great *prestidigitateur*, a professor of legerdemain, more cunning than Herring or Makebelieve and Snooks. But with all his guesses, he was forced to admit, here were phenomena he could not duplicate. He was quite at a loss to know how Aquosity was to account for this, and so he left more mystified than convinced, but like all Agnoninimists, far more deeply impressed with the weight of evidence than he cared to admit.

On taking his departure, which he did soon after, he requested Victor to accompany him and his friend to the Louvre, Notre Dame, and elsewhere on the following afternoon. Then, when all three of them returned into Bertha's presence, let her tell them everywhere they had been, whom they had seen, what they had said, seen, bought, eaten, drank, &c.

The following day arrived; to the Panthéon, the Louvre, Notre Dame, Bon Marché, to three confectioners, to three glove shops, to four restaurants the gentlemen went, taking copious mental notes of everything they saw and heard, and determining to remember all they said and did, and the appearance, dress and manners of all the people with whom they conversed or did business.

They were out from 1.30 till 5.30, and in four hours spent in shopping and sight-seeing in Paris, it is easy to see and buy a pretty good many things, and enter into conversation with a fairly large number of people. First they went to the

Louvre ; there they bought no end of little things in the Louvre Bazaar. Then they went through some of the many famous picture galleries, and admired several fine groups of statuary, taking particular notice of names and dates attached to them. Then they went to the Panthéon, and took particular notice of the number of candles and flowers upon a certain altar. Then they had some refreshments in a famous *café*. Then they made explorations in Notre Dame, taking especial notice of some curious old pictures behind one of the small altars which are never pointed out by guides to visitors, as they are not striking, but very curious, and well pay the careful study of any lover of antique art. Then to the Bon Marchè, where they bought no end of things : gloves, collars, handkerchiefs, neckties, &c., &c. Then having eaten ices and cake and drank coffee, they hailed a *voiture*, and wended their way to Hotel S. Lazare, where Bertha had been amusing herself reading and executing fancy wool-work during their absence.

Victor was confident that Bertha could tell them exactly where they had been, detail the altars and the pictures at which they had gazed, inform them with exactitude of the purchases they had made, and tell them precisely what they had eaten and drank. Fourier, who was very much absorbed in mesmeric experiments, was so excited concerning the success of the approaching ordeal, that he could scarcely wait five minutes before the sensitive was entranced. Friedland was curious and sceptical, and insisted that Bertha should not leave his presence for an instant, for fear that her brother or Fourier might tell her something about their afternoon's exploits. Victor went to his room and remained there some minutes ; he never put himself about or made haste to please anybody. Fourier just washed his hands, and returned to the *salon* instantly. Friedland sat gazing at Bertha, and pretending to read a newspaper.

Victor soon joined them, and, without any preliminaries of any kind, stood behind his sister, pressed his fingers lightly on her eyelids, then lightly touched each organ of her brain to render all alike responsive, and she was in a deep magnetic sleep, apparently very happy and well pleased with the tests which were imposed upon her.

Herr Friedland at once commenced questioning her.

"Where did we go this afternoon, when first we left this house ?"

Answer by Bertha : " You all three of you took a carriage, and went to the Louvre. I saw you, or I see you, there buying an umbrella, and bargaining over shirt-buttons, studs, sleeve-links, and such things. And then you went into the picture gallery, and you stood a long time before Guido's Holy Family ; and I see a date and a name under the picture quite distinctly, and you had a few quite sharp words about the date. Victor said 1757 was correct, and you Mr. Friedland declared 1759 was the year when it was executed ; and Victor said : ' Oh ! that's like you Germans ; you're always so pigheaded.' Mons. Fourier laughed and said : ' Mons. Vulpi ought to be a Frenchman, he so well loves us.' "

As these were exactly the facts in the case ; as these words were actually spoken, and in this sequence, by the gentlemen when in the Louvre, the German stood aghast.

" Marvellous ! marvellous !" he repeated. " I am astounded, fascinated. Do let us proceed if it will not injure the Fraulein."

" Oh, you can go on catechizing her for hours, when I am present, and she'll take no harm and experience no fatigue. She's all the stronger after the experiments, and since she's been put frequently into the magnetic sleep, she has grown several inches, gained several pounds in weight, and expanded her chest, till she's not the same girl she was, when she was without the strength she receives from me when I magnetize her," answered Victor.

Reassured by these confident words, in which Bertha's brother explained truthfully in few words the physical benefits arising from judicious exercise of psychologic power, Friedland and Fourier proceeded with their cross-examinations. This time Fourier was the catechist.

" Mademoiselle : Where did we go at the Panthéon—at which altar did we rest, and what there did we see ? "

Answer : " You stopped at the altar of the B.V.M. You noticed that there were seven candelabra upon the altar, twelve candles in each, making eighty-four in all, besides the six stationary on the super altar. There were sixteen vases of white artificial flowers, mostly lilacs ; and then, on the steps, on a very handsome, many-coloured carpet, there were eight pots of white roses, and on either side of the altar a tall, artificial white lily, so natural that you wanted to go up and smell, and would have done so if your way hadn't been

blocked by the closed altar-rail. As you were leaving the church, you bought three portraits of the woman who sits at a stall or table just outside the door, for which you paid one-and-a-half francs. You then went into a *café*, and you had pineapple ice-cream, and you ate five biscuits. Victor had Neapolitan cream and four biscuits. You drank one cup of coffee each, and you soaked one biscuit in the coffee. Victor said it looked awfully old-maidish. Mr. Friedland had chocolate ice-cream and five biscuits, and then two cups of *café noir*, into which he put some liqueur which the waiter brought with the coffee, in a little glass bottle.

"Precisely right!" shouted both gentlemen together, as Bertha ceased. "This surely is a wondrous power. Here there can be no deception. Is not this marvellous indeed?"

Victor then asked his sister a question:—

"Please tell these friends of mine what we looked at in Notre Dame?"

Answer: "Two very old, singular pictures behind the altar of S. Jerome. One represents Christ turning the money dealers out of the temple, the other is a very faded copy of Murillo's Transfiguration. The dates under the pictures are very much worn away, but you can just make out 1642, under one of them, and 1633, *you* think, under the other. Mr. Friedland declares the last figure is a 5."

"Astonishing! right again, exactly right. Every detail as it occurred; minute particulars given. Oh! most marvellous salts and water: when ye are organized into the shape of woman, what powers do ye possess!"

Thus did Friedland apostrophize the matter out of which man's molecular structure is evolved. The spirit, of course, even yet he could not discern, for his god, Aquosity, had blinded his eyes, lest he should become converted and realize the truth, that man is an immortal spiritual entity, awhile imprisoned in the clay of earth, ere the moment arrives when the angel of transition shall open the gate of life immortal, and land the emancipated spirit among the blest, who revel in the glories of emancipation from these tenements of dust, we call our mortal frames.

So far the experiments had been absolutely successful, not a single hitch had occurred to break the continuity of expression from the lips of Bertha. But now, Friedland put a question

which Victor could not have answered, as he had for a moment forgotten the circumstance.

"Tell us, fair Seeress, if you can, where the cab deposited us when we left Notre Dame?"

"I think, well, I'm not sure. Was it the Palais Royal? No, it was somewhere between there and Bon Marché. I can't see the name of the street exactly. I forget," she ended up, in rather an impatient tone of voice.

This failure was so singular and unsatisfactory after the preceding multiplied successes, that Fourier looked a little crest-fallen, and Friedland chuckled, saying:—

"How is this? Is the power departed, or what explanation can you give, Messieurs, to this mistake and this confession of forgetfulness?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I forgot for the moment just where we did stop then."

Friedland wrote the words: "To buy *Galignani's Messenger*," on a card, and held it under Victor's eyes. Quick as a flash: "To buy *Galignani's Messenger*," was repeated by Bertha, at the other end of the room.

Then the questioning proceeded in this wise:—

"What did we see and what did we buy at the Bon Marché?"

Everything Victor had noticed, bought, or remembered having seen one of the other gentlemen observe or buy, she accurately described. She even mentioned the young men and young women who had waited upon the customers; told them, even to a *centime*, the amount of change they had received, and exactly the words they had used while bargaining for a box of gloves. No one who had not been there, and who was not blessed with keen faculties of observation and unusually retentive memory, could possibly have detailed minor occurrences, which would have escaped the notice of ninety-nine persons out of every hundred, with such precision. Even Friedland was now satisfied that there must be something in this mesmerism, which he had never learnt to contemplate as a reality at Heidelberg. But he was still as materialistic in his thought as ever; but matter was playing tricks with him, he thought it incapable of playing hitherto.

Bertha had now been an hour and over under the spell, and as the gentlemen were beginning to smell their dinners, which were ordered for 7 o'clock, the *séance* was soon brought to a

close ; but not till Bertha had told them many startling things connected with their private history, but in no case did she transcend her brother's capabilities. What he knew she knew, but she was arbitrarily limited by his knowledge, even to the extent of being utterly powerless to recall events with which she herself was connected, but to which her brother was a stranger.

This chapter is already too long, so we will leave the gentlemen to dine and discuss what they have seen and heard, till, in another chapter, we meet them extending their researches.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE AGNOSTIC SATISFIED.

Our readers, who take any interest in psychological phenomena, are no doubt eagerly awaiting a recital of some further experiences of our heroine, in the presence of the Heidelberg professor.

Though by nature a coarse, animal, unspiritual personage, he was not by any means a being destitute of all finer feelings. He had somewhere in his anatomy the capabilities of suffering and rejoicing, and though his better nature was encased in a hide of materiality, as thick and impenetrable as the hide of any alligator or rhinoceros, yet all hides are only relatively invulnerable ; absolute invulnerability does not exist in man or beast. The deaf adder may stop its ears and refuse to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely, but who shall say that all the charms applied to adders, in the days of the Psalmist of Israel, are the all of the possible charms in the universe ? How often do we find a green and tender spot, where we should have been least likely to look for it ? How often an oasis is found in the most unlikely parts of an otherwise entirely arid waste of sand ? How often, on the hardest rocks, as though growing out of the very stone itself, we discover pretty flowers and ferns ?—all answers to the pessimist, who believes in absolute evil, or who fancies that any state of nature can be utterly and irreclaimably depraved.

Herr Friedland was a boor, a savage, anything but a gentleman ; so all the ladies said, who were unfortunate enough to be thrown into his company. He understood something of passion, but to ennobling spiritual affection, to all that can truly be called love, he was a stranger. He seemed incapable of friendship. Those who did business with him pronounced him sly, cunning, artful, unscrupulous, designing. He was one of those unhappy specimens of humanity, who seem almost to justify the Christadelphian theory, that there are some men who have no immortal souls, and therefore they cannot live hereafter, neither can they desire to live

hereafter ; and thus God is not unjust in destroying their consciousness at death.

Herr Friedland was not one of those perplexing enigmas in creation : a man out of place, utterly out of his element, doomed to live among the gross and unenlightened, while all his tastes were refined and aesthetic. He was rather one of Swedenborg's devils, who remain in hell because they prefer it to heaven. Take him to the opera,—he would much prefer the jeer, the ribald jest, the blasphemous oath, the sour beer, the garlic, and the bad tobacco, accompanied by snatches of vulgar song obtainable in any low-class German tavern, to the choicest masterpiece of Balfe or Gounod. Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, Handel—What were their compositions to his ears ? Just so much jargon of utterly unintelligible sounds. He literally preferred the contents of the cat's-meat man's barrow to the choicest viands on the table of a prince.

The vulture is no doubt satisfied with carrion, and prefers to eat the flesh of the dead in the famous Parsee Towers of Silence to regaling itself upon the choicest morsels of delicately cooked food. The *chef*, the *cuisinière*, are not for the bird of prey. It has no instincts leading it to Mutton's or Delmonico's ; and just as food prepared for bodily consumption is only delicious, or palatable even, to those with whose tastes it assimilates, so in the moral world, the dainties of a spiritual banquet are spread in vain, if placed upon the board to tempt the appetites of a *roué* or a libertine.

Herr Friedland was an Atheist, because he elected to be one. He contemptuously spurned all evidence of things higher than the level of the senses, and while the wonderful psychological phenomena he had so recently witnessed, had amused him and perplexed him, the revelations had been of so thoroughly a mundane character, that he did not feel that in reality he had been confronted at all by his *bête noir*, Spirit.

A young lady may be controlled by a young gentleman, to tell him where he bought his gloves and what he paid for them, without any proof palpable of immortality being brought to a materialistic mind. But the future—yea, the very near-future—was to bring to the German Agnonimist such startling evidences of life immortal as would shake to pieces his materialistic negations; as a gust of wind demolishes the

card-castle a child has erected in his play, and which he in his ignorance regards as an impregnable fortress, able to defy the flight of years and all the raging elements.

Friedland had one little, bright green spot in his dark and sordid nature. Like Madame Assoretta—of whom we have heard nothing for quite a long time—he had once had a little sister, of whom he was as fond as a boy of his temperament could be fond of anything. To say that he idolized her, or that he nearly died of a broken heart when she was taken from him, would be to overstate the case ridiculously; but we shall be keeping quite within the limits of history, if we inform our readers that this morose and cynical fellow, then a boy of eight, did actually pay many an early morning and late night visit to the Heidelberg burying-ground, to place flowers of his own gathering upon the grave of his little sister, Bertha. The name Bertha had drawn him, he scarcely knew how, to Victor's sister. It could not be that this graceful, lissom girl reminded him of the little, chubby German child who died, at six years of age, of whooping-cough, and who was the only playmate he had ever had.

Going to bed as usual after midnight, at his hotel in the Rue Notre Dame de Nazareth, he experienced what he had never in all his life experienced before, and that was a cold, chill, creeping sensation down the spine, as though some one were gently and very slyly pouring cold water down his back, next his skin, under his night-shirt. He grew positively nervous. The bed-clothes were pulled from off him, the bedstead itself began to move, the fire-irons were rattling in the fender, and, strangest of all, a hair-brush was being applied to his feet. Rats, mice, burglars, water coming in through the ceiling, the wind,—all these agencies were apostrophized in rapid succession.

"Confound it: what the deuce *can* it be," vociferated the professor so loudly, that he imagined the raps which followed his ejaculations proceeded from the adjoining room, which, by-the-bye, was quite empty, so he could be disturbing no one in the next apartment.

"It must be the brandy I drank at the club dinner, which has fuddled my brain, and made me fancy all these things are endowed with life around me. I must be ill. Good heavens! I'm as cold as death, and the thermometer registers 77. What can be the matter with me? Those

idiots at S. Lazare would tell me I was a medium, and that the spirits were playing battledore and shuttlecock with my bed-linen. Bosh! spirits, indeed! If any spirits have got hold of me, its rum, gin, brandy, and whisky. But I do feel queer, that's a fact. Why! who's that speaking? What! that voice? Here after all those years?"

"Berta, Berta, don't you remember Berta?"

And the words sounded through the room as clearly as though a child were in it, speaking appealingly to him, and upbraiding him for his neglect of her appeal.

"If I didn't know that she's dead and gone to dust, and that there's nothing left of us after the worms have had their fill, I could swear that was my sister's voice. But, laws-a-mercy! Bertha is the young lady who has been telling us what we did this afternoon, and, by Jove! if I don't think I've got Berta on the brain. Jolly name, by heavens! it is; and she's a mighty fine girl. I don't know but what I'd pop the question to her, if it weren't for that brute beast of a brother of hers, who never lets her stir a step without he's at her side. And then just to think of a girl eighteen years of age: a star singer, a star actress, a wonderful psychological, or mesmeric, or whatever they call it, phenomenon into the bargain, never speaking to a fellow except her brother, having no gentlemen friends, no lovers: why, its preposterous. She's mad—that's the long-and-the short of it,—and her brother's her keeper. But there is method in her madness, anyway. By heavens! if I'm not getting sentimental and nervous, and I don't know what; and am I not Professor Friedland, of Heidelberg, the man who writes to tell the world, with pen of steel, that there's no such thing as love, and no such thing as soul, and no such thing as honour, and no such thing as God, and no such thing as heaven? What have I to do with soft emotions, and whisperings of imaginary spirits, and fears of ghosts and phantasies, and thoughts of Bertas keeping me awake, all covered with perspiration, with my pulse at 180, and every nerve in my frame quivering?"

So the professor sweated, and fumed, and argued, and swore, and cursed, and sneered as the early morning hours wore on, and the noises grew fainter, and the voice of the little sister ceased; and then having smoked a tremendous meerschaum, and burned no end of holes in the bed-clothes and his own night-shirt, threatening to set the

whole house on fire with his fusees and ashes from his pipe, he fell into a heavy slumber, into the midst of which his little sister came and went, just as she had been in the olden days.

At 9 o'clock the *gargon* brought him his coffee : he always took his breakfast in his room, and usually in bed, which is quite a general custom on the Continent. Seeing the *gargon* look amazed and frightened, he said savagely to the boy :—

"What are you looking so scared about, you idiot? Is there anything about me to alarm you?"

The boy could scarcely answer, he was so amazed. First, he looked down at the floor, and Friedland following the direction of his eyes, saw a pool of blood in the middle of the carpet, and the furniture of the room, as well as a number of his own articles of wearing apparel, lying about in a state of most distracting confusion.

Catching sight of himself in the mirror, what was his astonishment, and may we not add alarm, when as though burned in upon his forehead were the words : "There are ghosts here, though you don't believe it." The words were clearly traced in blood, and his hands were covered with blood, also.

Ordering the waiter hastily out of the room, and muttering an imprecation, he hastily swallowed his coffee, into which he emptied at least a quartern of cognac ; and going to his washing-stand vigorously applied soap and water—yes, and pumice-stone, also—till his forehead burned and tingled with the pain, but the words were still upon his forehead, and the blood was still upon his hands.

This became alarming. He, the Agnoninimist of Heidelberg, who denied the very existence of the soul, and laughed to scorn every pretension to communion with any other spirits than those who dwelt in casks and bottles, to be obliged to go about the city with these atrocious words upon his brow, branding him wherever he went as one of those unfortunates whose mediumistic powers develop so singularly and spontaneously, that they are forced to give credence to facts which they loathe, and to submit to be pointed to as mediums, when they look upon all mediums as rogues or fools : what should he do, what could he do?

So naturally do we turn instinctively to the spirit-world for a solution of our difficulties—even though we deny its

existence with the lip; we admit it within us, no matter what our prejudices may be—that Friedland instantly bethought him of Bertha and her brother. They must have bewitched him in some mysterious way. They must have practised the black art upon him, and they alone could remove the burning seal from off his brow.

So, hurrying over his toilet, and ordering a close carriage, wrapping up his face and neck in a muffler, drawing his hat well over his eyes, and covering his hands in gloves, he set out at once for Signor Vulpi, and, as an excuse for his appearance in such a guise at so unseemly an hour, he directed a note to "Dr. Victor Vulpi, Physician from London, Hotel S. Lazare." This he gave to the cabman, and told him to tell the waiter at the hotel, that the gentleman in the cab was dangerously ill and needed relief at once, or he might die before assistance reached him.

Arrived at S. Lazare, the waiter to whom the cabman gave the note took it up immediately to Victor's room. This young gentleman was in bed, in a luxurious fancy night-robe which had cost 300 francs in Bon Marchè, two or three days before. He was propped up with pillows, reading "*La Paganne*," the latest French novel, which had scandalized the moralists, and drawn down upon its author the fiercest condemnation of persons who saw themselves in it, and were so terrified at the look of their sins, when printed before their eyes in black and white, that they immediately set to work to scandalize the author, declaring that she was an awful woman, and that no respectable house ought to tolerate the introduction of so corrupt a work of fiction.

Victor and Bertha both read these works of fiction, and enjoyed them heartily; not because they admired the vices and the intrigues of the characters introduced, but because the pictures were so true to life, and were such exact likenesses of the very refined and eminently respectable ladies and gentlemen who so much objected to the unhealthy novels.

Victor never saw anyone professionally, or even allowed a friendly call, earlier than 12 o'clock; and here was a note demanding an immediate answer, brought to his room at 10. The boy who brought it to him, said to his fellow-servants afterwards :—

"I shall want five francs, at least, for taking another up to

that handsome young singer. He nearly blew my head off for disturbing him. I wish I could have *pâté de foie gras*, and hothouse grapes at five francs a pound, every morning for breakfast, and lie in bed till mid-day ; I'd do without 300 franc dressing-jackets."

The note, which proved so unwelcome a visitor, read as follows :—

" **SIGNOR VULPI:** Dear Sir,—I think I'm dying. Do attend to me at once. FRIEDLAND."

The only answer given by the fair young "doctor," the "Physician from London," was :—

" Call at 12. I see no one earlier."

Friedland was in despair. Could he see Miss Bertha ? Would not she influence her brother on his behalf ?

Miss Bertha was in church : she had gone to a requiem mass at S. Augustin's, and would not be home till nearly 11, at the earliest.

Friedland made a desperate attempt to see the imperious young magnetizer, to whom he could not help attributing his present horrible condition. He pretended to be very feeble, and leaning heavily upon the shoulders of two waiters, had himself slowly, and, so far as the waiters were concerned, painfully dragged upstairs. He was going to beard the lion in his den. He dared what no one else would have dared, not even Vulpis most intimate friend. He knocked on Victor's door, and sued for admittance into his private apartment at 10 o'clock in the morning.

" Keep out, and go to the devil !" was the only response he got, after repeated knockings.

But he was not to be repulsed so easily, so trying the door, he walked boldly in and confronted his adversary, as manfully as his muffled appearance and the crouching attitude he assumed to keep up the feint of dangerous sickness, would allow.

" Sir ! How dare you !" was all he heard, till he picked himself up, with the assistance of half-a-dozen waiters, on the landing.

Victor had got out of bed, and sprung upon him like a tiger, prostrating him at one blow on the landing. He had then coolly re-entered his room, got back to bed, and resumed his novel.

All the servants were in a titter; they knew Friedland well, he often called at S. Lazare, to see gentlemen who were guests of the house. But he was "a mean cuss," to use the elegant phraseology of all the boys and men throughout the establishment. Victor was a tyrant, very exacting and commanding, but he was lavish with his cash; and money, in this world, covers a multitude of sins. Friedland was never known to give away a single *centime*, and when he went to church, to see the decorations and hear the music, with friends who desired to inspect the building, he would pretend he couldn't see the woman who collected the coppers for the use of chairs at service-time, so that his companions might pay a halfpenny or a penny for him. He accepted every invitation out he ever got; he never refused coffee, chocolate, ices, drives in your carriage or in your hired vehicle; seats at the opera, everything you offered him he accepted; everything you bought for him he was glad to get; but within the memory of man, he had never been known to give away even an old rag or a piece of note-paper. So he was not likely to be much of a favourite in a country where "*bleeding*" of foreigners is an immense source of income with servants of all descriptions, and hotel proprietors and waiters in particular.

Friedland's fall had dislodged his mufflers and knocked off his hat, and there, exposed to the jeering, wholly unsympathetic, unpitying gaze of a host of *garçons*, lay the Heidelberg Agnoninimist, testifying, oh how reluctantly, in words of blood, to the existence of—just think of it!—*ghosts*, not even spirits, but *ghosts*, spirits of the lowest and most sensational type, whose existence is scouted by numbers of respectable church and chapel-goers, who believe in immortality and in miracles.

The French countenance is easily convulsed when the risibilities are appealed to, and you may be sure Friedland was in no enviable position, the laughing-stock of a crowd of open-mouthed *garçons*, who enjoyed his confusion better than anything they had ever witnessed at the circus or the pantomime.

In the midst of this harrowing scene, Bertha returned from S. Augustin's. She had come straight home, immediately the service concluded, feeling as though something or someone was requiring her immediate attention.

Seeing a crowd on the stairs, as she ascended to the *salon*, her first thought was of her brother: could he be ill, and

have fallen on the stairs? She rushed to the spot where the confusion was at its height, and was at once relieved to see the amused expression on the faces of the bystanders. If anything were seriously the matter with anyone, surely the whole community would not appear convulsed with laughter. The laughter reassured her; and laughter, like yawning, is infectious, and she was soon grinning all over her face, she knew not at what.

But when she caught sight of the professor, she fairly yelled. There he stood gesticulating wildly in a *patois* composed of bad French and German, with an English word here and there inserted to render the jargon still more ridiculous. His carroty locks were stiff as bristles, and stood upright on his head, reminding one of a huge porcupine, or a monster hedgehog, perhaps, to make the simile quite true to nature.

"There are ghosts here, though you don't believe it," written in blood upon his temples convulsed her. Could this be one of Victor's tricks, could this garlic-smelling German have offended her fastidious and impetuous brother, and this had been the revenge the young Nemesis had taken?

Hurriedly addressing the professor, she said, in as steady a voice as she could command (she was shaking with laughter, and did not wish the man she addressed to feel his position more keenly than necessary):—

"I suppose, Sir, you have come to see my brother. He never receives visitors till mid-day, but if your business is very urgent, I will speak to him, and no doubt he will see you."

"May I be permitted to enter your *salon*?" said the professor; "and I will explain everything to you."

Certainly," answered Bertha. "Take a seat for a minute, and I will tell Victor you are here, and he will join you no doubt in a few moments."

Before Friedland could utter a word to stay her movements, she was gone, and knocking at her brother's door in her own peculiar way that he might know who it was that sought admission, the door instantly opened, and Bertha's voice was audible to Friedland, while she was telling her brother all about her meeting with the German on the stairway.

Victor knew nothing of the blood marks, not having seen Friedland's face uncovered since the evening before, when it was innocent of such adornments. At the recital of the

story, Victor positively roared, and though he had seen much of life, and was not easily caught by glaring novelties, he could scarcely contain himself long enough to put on his *robe de chambre* and slippers, in which he usually lounged till business out of doors necessitated his donning a costume more appropriate to the street.

There sat Friedland on the sofa, muttering and spluttering under his breath, in a towering rage.

"Ye gods and furies, and ye demons all!" quoted Victor, as he approached the insensate man. "What the devil has come over you, my fine fellow, to come here like a raging tornado, and awaken the household at this unearthly hour? What have you been doing to yourself? How came that brand upon your brow? Speak, prisoner, speak," taunted Victor, mockingly, feeling sure that some sinister motives had led up to this extraordinary and unwelcome visit.

"Explain it yourself, please," grunted Friedland. "This is some of your doings, but how you managed it with all your conjurations is more than I can make out."

"Now, Sir, from your note, which was thrust into my hand this morning by a servant, I understand you to say you are ill and need my assistance. Though I am not what is ordinarily called a physician, as you have good reason for knowing, I am a magnetist; and if your case is serious, I will do my best to be of service to you. But, remember, you come to me as a suppliant not as a commander. I will tolerate none of your insolence, I can assure you; so please be seated, and tell me your symptoms."

"First, inform me what you mean by making a worse guy of yourself than you usually are, and to what circumstances are we indebted for your appearance this minute in this mysterious *rôle*. To accuse us of knowing anything about those letters on your forehead is absurd. You will, please, inform us what occurred to you, either last night or this morning, to bring about so singular an appearance."

Feeling it necessary to compose himself, and eat humble pie to this young man, whom he verily believed had him completely in his power, the German professor detailed the experiences of the past night, with which our readers are, to some extent, familiar, and then declared his intention of requesting Victor to remove the burning brand from his brow, if any of his arts could accomplish so desirable an end.

Victor made several magnetic passes over the place, and did all he could to erase the mystic words, but there they remained, spite of all his efforts to remove them. Evidently a higher power than Victor's had been at work this time, so he decided to entrance Bertha, and seek an explanation from the spirits who controlled her, if any could be summoned.

But, gazing at his sister, he saw her entranced already, and what was his surprise when she arose, and going up to the professor, she took both his hands in hers, from which the blood-marks instantly disappeared ; and then stroking him lightly on the forehead, she caused every letter of the mysterious writing to vanish. Then stroking him caressingly, in lisping, childish accents she said to him :—

" Little sissy Berta did come to you last night. Don't think I'm dead, 'cause I'm not."

Having said this, Bertha awoke, and the professor, with tears streaming down his cheeks, fell on his knees at Bertha's feet, and then and there renounced his infidelity, gave up his Agnoninimity, and from that moment gave up with it his debasing practices, his niggardly modes of life, his blasphemous oaths, and all that made him hideous in the eyes of angels. A little child, his only little sister, had converted him, and from that moment he was a new man, " Born again of water and of the spirit."

Instantaneous conversion is not instantaneous perfection, so our readers must not expect to find the converted professor transformed at once from a spirit of darkness into an angel of light. Lapses, falls, declensions many he might know, but that moment was a supreme crisis, a turning point in his life. The devil within him was wounded and lay prostrate, sick unto death, and his good angel in that hour arose triumphant, and with his victorious sword thrust hard at the adversary, who lay there struggling but not dead.

Ever after Friedland would be a believer in goodness and immortality, and from that hour his face lost its hard and coarse expression, and when he went back to Heidelberg, he was received into the university as Professor of Psychology, and is at this day a humane, charitable, useful member of society. He often remembers the burning letters on his brow, and thanks God for them ; that God who sets a mark upon his guilty creatures, not that they be destroyed, but lest any should destroy them.

## CHAPTER XV.

### SPIRITUALISM PHILOSOPHIZED.

How the Professor had become converted, he himself could scarcely tell. The evidence of his little sister's real presence with him had come so overwhelmingly to his mind, that he was forced to accept, not only the logic of facts, but the yet more penetrating and unanswerable persuasions of his own inner nature. His sister's words—spoken so gently, so artlessly, so characteristically through an entire stranger to him and to her, one who could not possibly have known that he ever had a little sister, much less that her name was Berta—coupled with the marvels of the preceding night, and the charming away in an instant of the blood words from his brow, had completed the work the psychological experiments of yesterday had begun; and how to enquire more deeply into this wonderful fact of spirit life, how should he get to know more? was all his query now.

Agnonimity was now arrant folly to him. His boasted learning had deserted him in an hour, and the iceberg of his ignorance, and indifference to all things spiritual, had melted in a moment beneath the warm, cheering rays of spiritual sunshine which flooded his mind, as words of truth and inspiration fell on the ear of his long-dormant spirit, from the lips of a seeress whose probity he could not question, and whose sincerity was as clear as the sun at noonday.

The Opera season was proceeding in good earnest, the approaching Christmas festivities kept the gay city in a fever; a turmoil of gaiety. The restrictions which the Church sets upon amusements during the penitential season of Advent, affect *la belle monde de Paris* very slightly if at all. Perhaps the theatres are a little thinner and parties less numerous on the nights when the churches are crowded with the devout. But there are so many unchurched thousands always in the city, so many *habitues* of all popular places of amusement, and so many visitors ready to flock wherever a star is said to

be shining, that the Advent month has little appreciable effect upon places of public entertainment.

Bertha had made her *début* in the Grand Opera House as Lucia; Victor had sustained the *rôle* of Enrico. In Italian they were both experts, and as Latin is the language of the Catholic Church in all lands beneath the sun, so Italian is the language of the Opera.

As the missal and the vesper book are as serviceable in Brazil as in London, so the opera libretto answers in Spain, France, England, Italy, and makes men feel that religion may have a universal language, and that song may have the same. Whatever may be the objections raised to the Latin Ritual and the Italian Opera, on the score that the multitude do not understand it, there is something indescribably home-like when in a foreign land, to enter the portals of a church and hear the self-same words you have heard from earliest childhood in your own land, and then go to the theatre and hear the same sweet music and the same mellifluous accents, to which you have been accustomed ever since you went to the opera for the first time, chaperoned by some demure relations, who were terribly afraid you would be contaminated on your first introduction into what is called "the world."

Nations are coming nearer together to-day than they have ever been before. Varying languages are becoming hourly more and more perplexing. Cannot some steps be taken to form some one good universal language, in which all the best elements of every language may be embodied: which shall supersede all existing clannish tongues, and make the human family a unit and a brotherhood? When that auspicious task is completed, we may safely abolish the Latin Mass and the Italian Opera, but till then, let the language of the Church, which is one, and the language of the Stage, which is one, point as beacon lights to a coming unity, in which will be vanquished all the baneful consequences arising from the Tower of Babel, which must be a vague, fabulous history of the period when one great nation split up into many smaller ones, and tongues were purposely confused that peoples might be kept apart, as each regarded his neighbour as his deadly foe.

We shall soon cease to ask pardon for digressions, our sins are so numerous in a digressive direction. The doctrine of the association of ideas must come to our rescue, and be our apology.

Bertha was a grand and unequivocal success in Opera : from the sumptuous 20 franc *fauteuil* to the 3 franc *quatrième places*, every seat was filled whenever she appeared.

Victor divided honours with her. No one ever attempted to decide which singer made the profoundest impression on the immense and stylish, and shall we add—we think we may with some truth—cultured auditory. Probably the ladies fell most in love with the imposing *frère*, and the gentlemen with the ravishing and unsophisticated *sœur*.

Bertha was one of those singular characters which you can never spoil by flattery. She accepted homage as her due. She knew she pleased, and she was glad she gave people pleasure ; but to put on airs was something as foreign to her as it is to the thrush or the nightingale. She looked upon her voice and her dramatic talent as natural acquisitions, for the possession of which she deserved neither praise nor censure. She was a child of nature through and through, and this pure naturalness gave her a charm, which all the painted and powdered belles of society would have given their very souls for. She attracted everybody : men, women, children—yea, and animals acknowledged her and loved her. A wounded dog, smarting under his cruel master's lash, would look up to her with pleading, wistful eyes ; and she understood the language of the quadruped far better than she comprehended the inane biped who had thrashed it, and who was called the superior being.

On one occasion after the performance when the whole city had been at her feet, she was getting into her carriage when a little, blue, Italian gray-hound,—a slender, sensitive, delicate creature—came up to her whining and whimpering, evidently in great pain. Instantly a tall, athletic, young man, who had been seeking in vain to win her affections, called the dog, who clung with a vice-like grasp to Bertha's skirts. The dog remaining immovable, he lashed the little creature with the horsewhip, till it fell on the pavement in a swoon of agony. Turning round to Bertha, who was hastily getting out of her carriage to pick up and console the suffering animal, she struck him sharply in the face with the whip she wrenched from his hand, and drove off with the dog in her lap.

It is needless to say the Viscount was appalled. He was madly in love with Bertha, and she despised him, and he had surely now incurred her everlasting displeasure.

She met him the following evening, on the steps of the Opera. She had the gray-hound in her arms, as she was ascending the steps. Her brother was at her side, the dog in her disengaged arm. The Viscount actually craved her pardon for his cruelty on the previous evening, and she answered him with these words:—

“ When you are the equal of this little animal, I will allow you to address me.”

And he had sat at table with Royalty, and had an income of £20,000 per annum.

She would stop in the street to ask a beggar woman how her child was. She would stop her carriage often, and pick up a poor seamstress who was going from work, so exhausted as to be nearly fainting. She would take an Italian organ-grinder's son to a box at the opera, in her own carriage, because he loved music and could not pay to hear it. But the men who showed themselves lower than the brutes, who thought every hateful passion was divine in them, because they were gilded and titled, these she spurned as the very dust under her feet.

She was utterly impervious to all the advances men of this stamp could possibly make to her. Other singers had their lovers and their *billets doux*. She had hundreds of love-letters, but she never read them. She handed them unopened to her brother, who returned them to their authors when addresses were given, while he burnt the rest with a double feeling of satisfaction, half arising from the ecstasy of devotion his sister called forth, and half from the scorn with which she put from her the fashionable but questionable men who ran after her. She was so utterly above the intrigues and fashionable vices of the world, that she in reality had no temptations in this line to encounter. All masculine familiarity filled her with disgust, and she never courted effusion from companions of her own sex. She was an iceberg, a marble statue, a creature very beautiful but without a heart—so the men and women who lived upon intrigue styled her; but she had a heart to love deeply and fervently, but no heart to bestow upon every jackdaw who desired her to wear it on her sleeve that he might peck at it and corrode it, and then, having defiled it, cast it from him as a worthless thing.

During this period of her sojourn in Paris, Bertha's mediumistic powers were developing amazingly. She and her

brother sat privately for spirit communications, every afternoon from 5 till 6, finding that this spare hour just before dinner in the winter fire-light suited them better than any other at this season.

But some will ask: Is not sitting very weakening? Do not the spirits consume a vast amount of the medium's vital force, and so deplete the system as to render it unfit for any strain afterwards?

Yes, that is so, when conditions are inharmonious, but when two or more persons in complete sympathy with each other sit for mutual benefit, the result is, that all are benefitted, each one strengthened and rendered more capable of fulfilling the ordinary tasks of life.

At these times Bertha would be inspired to answer the most intricate and profound questions—scientific, philosophic, historic and religious,—and she would also frequently give private personal information of the most accurate and startling description. For instance, she would describe exactly the persons whom they would meet that evening and on following days; she would read letters accurately which had been written, and posted to them from distant places, and many hours and sometimes days afterwards the letters would come, and in them would always be the exact words which Bertha had seen and read clairvoyantly. At these times she went far beyond anything she could possibly have gathered from her brother's mind, for while he could magnetize and indeed absolutely control her, she being perfectly his mesmeric subject, other and higher powers soon manifested themselves, and under their influence Bertha soon became one of the most marvellous trance mediums the world has ever yet produced.

At one of these 5 o'clock sittings, Victor asked the spirits controlling Bertha, whether they had any objection to Messrs. Fourier and Friedland joining the circle on some afternoon. The answer was as follows, given by the spirit immediately controlling on behalf of the band:—

"We cannot allow any one but yourself to sit with her at this hour, when she has to sing in opera or grand concert, or to take a heavy part in any play during the ensuing evening, as no one's magnetism but your own is so entirely congenial with hers, that she will experience no loss of power from being controlled; but if you will arrange for an interview with

these gentlemen on Sunday evening, we shall be very glad to converse with them, as you have the evening to do as you please with."

"Will it not then be as well to have the circle at 8 o'clock," pursued Victor.

"No, you will do best to keep to your regular place and hour. Spirits have engagements and occupations as well as yourselves, and as they are not ubiquitous, they can only be in one place at a time, though they can often impress sensitives in different places at the same time; but as the spirit with whom you are now conversing possesses the medium, that is, controls her organically, the controlling spirit is locally present, and for the time being embodied, while the spirit of the medium is liberated, and often passes into spirit life, or travels among friends on earth. Punctuality in keeping appointments with spirits is a great element of success, and it is also highly desirable to set apart some special place in which to seek communion with the invisibles. After you have selected a place and hour, keep to it."

Following the advice of the spirits, a meeting was convened for the following Sunday at 5 p.m. Mons. Fourier, Herr Friedland, Mdme. and Mdlle. Cheval were the invited sitters. These with Bertha and Victor constituted a sufficiently large circle—six in all: three ladies and three gentlemen.

As the answers given through Bertha's mediumship at this *séance*, threw much light upon the wonderful manifestations which had so recently occurred in Friedland's room at the hotel, and as the answers generally are of a nature to interest and instruct the public at large, we shall here append a few of the most notable among them.

After singing, with piano accompaniment, Bertha was soon entranced, this time without any visible assistance from her brother. She passed quickly and quietly into the unconscious state, almost imperceptibly; only, when she was under control, her eyes had a peculiar fixed gaze they had not at other times, and there was an expression of rapt sublimity upon her features, which at other times they did not possess.

After offering up a most beautiful invocation, the control announced himself ready to answer any questions which might be propounded, bearing upon Spiritualism, or indeed upon any subject which concerned the welfare of the human race here or hereafter.

Friedland was, of course, the anxious interrogator. He was full of queries concerning the strange phenomena to which he had been a victim, and so numerous were his queries, that not until ninety minutes had been spent in talking on his subjects, could anybody else get a chance to put in a word edgeways.

His first enquiry ran as follows :—

Question.—“ You are doubtless acquainted with what took place in my room the other night. Can you explain the mystery of the movements, the voices, and particularly the blood on my forehead and hands ? ”

Ans.—“ The room you sleep in is one that is vulgarly called ‘ haunted,’ and there is far more truth in ghost stories and tales of haunted houses, than most people are willing to believe. In your room a spirit is confined, who committed murder forty years ago, on the old site where a building stood which was taken down before the present hotel was built. This spirit has been all these years confined to that spot, and is now just beginning to find his way from it, and to you he owes in large measure his approaching deliverance. You are a strong physical medium ; you are a powerful, full-blooded man, and your habits have been such as to ally you with earth-bound spirits. You came here and had a sitting with the young lady we are now controlling, and got your mediumship developed without your knowledge, in this room, which is completely filled with the force necessary for healing, developing, and spirit-manifestations. Going back to your own room, and going to bed, you were rendered susceptible to the influence of this fettered spirit, who, though impervious to spirit-life, was capable of employing your animal magnetism. The ardent spirits you had imbibed stimulated your body, and caused it to throw off more vital force than usual, through your every pore. This the spirit could and did make use of, and with the vital emanations you so freely dispensed in form of invisible vapour, the spirit produced the appearance of blood, and pulled your bed-clothes about violently, and made other unwelcome disturbances.”

Ques.—“ Will you be so kind as to tell me exactly how the blood letters were produced upon my forehead, and how they were removed ? ”

Ans.—“ You have blood in your system. Your own blood, in quantities sufficient to produce the lettering, was caused

to ooze through your skin by spirit power, and thus with the blood taken from within your body the writing was produced upon your forehead. This writing was removed by the spirit power which produced it. The blood was returned into the system, and the letters vanished. You may, however, be curious to know how the blood should so stain the skin, that you could not wash it off. This was due to the admixture of a chemical substance with the blood, which rendered it peculiarly adhesive. This substance was also extracted from your body."

Ques.—“But you gave us to understand that the spirit who was in my room was a dark spirit; can bad spirits produce such wonderful phenomena?”

Ans.—“The spirit who produced the disturbances was, as we have said, a fettered, earth-bound spirit, who in earth life had been a murderer. Excuse us for speaking frankly, your own condition was sensual rather than spiritual, and there was some mystic tie between yourself and this spirit, which enabled him to control the emanations from your person. The writing upon your forehead was really produced by the action of an exalted spirit, who simply used the earth-bound spirit as a servant or subject. The words written upon your brow were for your good, and were placed there to convince you of spiritual existence. Earth-bound spirits are allowed to exert their influence, such as it is, by the higher powers, when you are so low in the moral scale as to require to suffer by the annoyances they cause you. When you need the discipline of such annoyance, it does you good to suffer. When you have outgrown these darker states, you are impervious to evil; being superior to it, it cannot touch you. You may be aware of its proximity, but it cannot contaminate you. In your case, the powers which guided events were certainly benign, and you have reason to rejoice that you were thus visited.”

Ques.—“How was it that I heard my sister's voice so plainly amid the din? What had she to do with it?”

Ans.—“Your sister, as a little girl on earth, loved you very dearly, and you have never quite forgotten your affection for her. She came with you to see this young lady, and as her name is so nearly like your sister's, you were led to think about your sister when you went away from here. This young lady specially brought her to your mind. We have already said, that there are conditions here for medium-

istic development, and you gained a great deal of development in a very short time in this room. Your sister, with the assistance she gained from Victor and Bertha, was able to materialize vocal organs, and speak in the direct voice in your chamber. This speaking in the direct voice is a form of spirit materialization, or form manifestation ; you will see more of this phenomenon on a more extended scale shortly. On the occasion to which you refer, the larynx, thorax, and all necessary organs of speech were formed out of the emanations from your person, supplemented by affinitizing particles of matter gathered from the atmosphere. Your sister is very glad to have an opportunity of showing her presence in any way, as she is constantly with you, and is a guide to you in various ways, which as yet you have not understood."

At the expiration of the hour-and-a-half spent in initiating Friedland into the philosophy of Spiritualism, Madame and Mdlle. Cheval asked some questions concerning development, which elicited lengthy and lucid replies. Among other information they were directed never to sit with any person who was the least uncongenial. They were told that bathing before sitting was very desirable, and that when possible a change of raiment was useful. That hour of the day or night was best when they could feel the most thoroughly retired and secure from interruption.

Mons. Fourier then asked for a poem, and without the slightest hesitation, the young improvisatrices, under control of a spirit, who called herself "Monadonah," gave the following verses on—

#### "CELESTIAL LOVE."

Love is the sweet and charméd word,  
 Which sounds above all din and strife ;  
 Allied with home, allied with all  
 That is most beautiful, and rife  
 With holiest impulse here below,  
 With holiest thought in realms serene,  
 It conquers anguish, fear, and death,  
 Removes all bars that intervene  
 'Twixt it and the fond object blest.  
 'Neath its divine and sovereign sway  
 The world forgets to sin again,  
 And man has reached the golden day.

Oh ! grace apostrophized on earth  
By poet, sybil, saint, and seer,  
Man yet awaits thy perfect ray  
To light him out of darkness here.  
Love on the earth is clouded o'er  
By passion, pride, and love of self;  
'Tis masked in grasping avarice,  
And is depraved to things of pelf.  
But love, grown free beyond the sky,  
Is always constant, always pure,  
And through the uncounted ages lives,  
And will *eternally* endure.

Love is the movement of the soul,  
Superior to the bonds of sense ;  
It asketh not for a return,  
It seeketh not a recompense :  
It gives and gives, and *only* gives,  
In giving it is fully blest ;  
And then when asking no return,  
A rich return infills the breast.  
It overflows to all mankind,  
It blesses whereso'er it goes,  
And traces true relationship  
With God, from whom it ever flows.

Celestial Love is love divine,  
Love joined with Wisdom, dual, bright  
As angel spirits ever are  
When they've attained yon heavenly height.  
Love good, love all your neighbours here,  
Love all your enemies, and pray  
By works and not by empty words.  
Go help all suffering hearts to-day ;  
And then your crowns in heaven will shine  
With splendours agelessly divine.

Bertha in her normal condition could not write two lines of poetry, and the above is but a feeble specimen of her inspired verses.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## A HETERODOX PREACHER.

CHRISTMAS came and went, Twelfth-day festivities were ended, and the time drew near for Bertha and her brother to quit gay Paris, and wend their way back to London ; as they had signed a contract for a six months' engagement in the English capital, during which period they were to take leading parts in the grandest concerts of the approaching season, and to startle frequenters of the opera, by more brilliant successes than any they had yet attained.

Since Bertha had been in the constant society of her brother, and had been free from those harassing and wasting experiences which had been continuously hers at Silvern Terrace, in days gone by, she had developed from a promising bud into a beautiful opening flower. She was still a girl in every particular. She had none of that unlovely precocity, which makes a boy a man, and a girl a woman, prematurely. The graceful figure was very youthful : it had not burst forth into its June splendours : it was still in May, and for this reason was the more enrapturingly beautiful in the eyes of all who could appreciate true artistic grace.

Bertha was a true *artiste* in every sense of the word, and yet she had never been educated for the stage, in the conventional sense. She had burst upon the theatrical world as a star of the first magnitude, suddenly discovered by some enterprising manager who had heard of her from Dr. Kneesswell. Her acting was as truly inspired as her singing and her speaking, and while some of our church and chapel-going readers, who are accustomed to hear the Pulpit denounce the Stage, will be asking how can you reconcile inspiration of a high and elevating order with the profession of an actress, we will introduce our readers to the views of Bertha's inspirers on the subject, and also to the opinions publicly expressed by a noted minister of the Gospel, whom we will call the Rev. Howard Bruin, on the same subject.

It must not be supposed, that Bertha's wonderful gift of

inspirational speaking was in any way neglected during the period of which we are now writing. She had not as yet addressed a large public audience directly on the subject of Spiritualism, though as an elocutionist she was very widely and favourably known, and in response to *encores* she would invariably render one of her inimitable inspired poems, which were the wonder and delight of all who heard them. The gift of the Italian *improvvisorì* sank into insignificance, when contrasted with the real gems of poetry which fell from Bertha's inspired lips.

On one occasion at a drawing-room *soirée*, in which Bertha was the most prominent participant, a minister of very high standing was present, who was at that time settled over one of the largest and most fashionable Congregational churches, at the North End of London.

Parade Street Chapel was a centre of wealth and fashion. It was a grand, imposing edifice, capable of seating nearly 2,000 persons comfortably. The organ disputed the palm with that of St. Paul's Cathedral, and the organist, though as yet a young musician, was quite as brilliant a performer as Turle, Gosling, Better, or any of the "crack" organists of the country, who receive fabulous sums for their work : none too much, perhaps, considering the money spent on their education, but if they only receive enough, certain it is that many very competent persons are shamefully underpaid ; not because they have too little talent to command liberal remuneration, but because they have not enough of that all-prevailing desideratum—name.

At this *soirée*, Rev. Howard Bruin was present, along with Dr. Calvin Thumbscrew, pastor of another and almost equally fashionable Congregational church.

Howard Bruin was a generous, open-hearted, whole-souled man, very well read, but with even more knowledge of human nature than he had of books.

Dr. Calvin Thumbscrew was very highly educated, very pompous, aristocratic and wealthy, and oh ! so intensely orthodox, that he felt it to be his special duty to preach against Mr. Bruin, from the pulpit of his chapel.

Mr. Bruin drew the largest congregation, and won the sympathies of everybody by his sympathetic nature, which was tender as the tenderest woman's, and yet strong as a rock and true as steel.

Bruin was a man of about thirty years of age, powerfully built, not singularly handsome, but of peculiarly prepossessing appearance. He was about five feet ten inches in height, broad in proportion, but with no disposition to corpulency. He had a magnificently shaped head, adorned with a luxuriant growth of fine, soft, silky chestnut hair, which naturally waved, though it could not be called curly exactly. His features were shapely and regular; his nose perfectly aquiline; his mirth very well shaped and remarkably pleasing in its expression; his eyes were large and lustrous, tender, full, deep and strong: they seemed to look you through and through, as though they pierced to your very soul, and read the secrets of your mind, and yet they had nothing of the inquisitorial stare about them. They let the sinner know that he could not cloak his transgression from their fearless gaze, but they looked upon every fallen creature as a brother or a sister, and evinced a resolute determination, if possible, to exterminate the sin and save the sinner.

After those majestic eyes had been gazing, during the entire length of a church service, upon some weak and erring mortal, the wanderer from the fold would often stray timidly into the vestry, when the service was over, and rapping upon the door, be invited by Mr. Bruin to come in and unburden his sin and sorrow-laden mind. Mr. Bruin was nothing of a sacerdotalist; to him "priest" was an unmeaning word. He had often denounced auricular confession from his pulpit, and inveighed strongly against the idea of absolution having any saving efficacy whatever. Sacramental penance he denounced in unmeasured accents, yet the vestry of Parade Street Chapel was in many senses a confessional box. The minister, however, instead of being seated in a Romish box, with the suppliant kneeling by a grating, gazing at a crucifix, would draw a chair up to the fire for his stray sheep or lamb, and in a perfectly unassuming, brotherly, rather than fatherly, manner, would invite confidences, though he never demanded them, and then when anything could be done to help the poor unfortunate, it was done promptly, sagaciously, and unceremoniously. Mr. Bruin, as a preacher, had a wonderful insight into any subject with which he essayed to deal. He was at home anywhere, and made his auditors feel at home wherever he was.

The Sunday evening immediately preceding the *soirée* at Cavendish Square, where we are first introduced to him, he had preached upon Elijah and the Prophets of Baal; and so eloquent had he been, that though he preached from 7 till 8.25, no one thought the sermon long; and Dr. Thumbscrew's congregation always complained when their pastor exceeded, ever so slightly, the circumscribed, allotted period of forty-five minutes.

In this sermon on Elijah, Mr. Bruin had advanced some very heterodox opinions, which had startled and offended some of the trustees of the Chapel. Judge Tadpole and Colonel Blunderbuss were certain that they were included among Mr. Bruin's modern prophets of Baal, and when he excoriated the worship of Mammon, in blazing speech, which fell like red-hot coals, fresh from the altar of divine truth, upon the heads of the Mount St. Michaels, who were staunch supporters of the Chapel, and who had won their fortune entirely by illicit speculation, the tumult at the next vestry meeting of the deacons can be better imagined than described.

The upshot of the whole matter was, that Mr. Bruin should be waited upon by the trustees and deacons, and requested to refrain from using such strong language against what he called "the glaring vices of the day." They assured him they greatly prized his talents, and his eminent chapel-filling abilities were certainly a great reason why they should seriously consider any suggestions which had been made to them by some of the old members, who pronounced Mr. Bruin's views decidedly unsound. They hoped they should never feel obliged to ask him to resign, but they must implore him to preach the Gospel, and not take a text from S. Paul, and then preach from the newspapers, as he had been in the habit of doing of late. Politics in the pulpit might draw a large concourse of people, but their Chapel must not be used except for the proclamation of the unsullied Gospel of Christ.

So said the deacons; so said the trustees; so said the aged members; not because they had really scented heresy in his sermons, though they were heretical many times from a strictly orthodox standpoint, but because a preacher of the Gospel had denounced gambling in stocks, and other crying iniquities of the age, and had thereby offended the Mount St. Michaels, whose ill-gotten gains had enlarged and newly

seated the Chapel, and furnished it with its present magnificent organ and stained-glass windows.

Dr. Calvin Thumbscrew was a connexion, by marriage, of the Mount St. Michaels, and he had a nephew who had just graduated from the New College, at Westminster, and was just waiting for a berth, where he and his uncle could work together, and control two chapels instead of one. Dr. Thumbscrew had had his eye on Parade Street Chapel for some time, and coveted it for his nephew. He had, therefore, endeavoured by all means in his power to influence the influential members of Parade Street against Mr. Bruin, and now the three gentlemen had met at a *soirée*, where the Thumbscrews had resolved to capture their prey, by forcing Mr. Bruin to give vent to some opinions he held—some people said secretly, others, openly—on the subject of Spiritualism. On the ground that he was unorthodox and a Spiritualist, he might surely be expelled from office, and then it would no doubt be an easy matter to get his nephew into the pulpit at Parade Street.

Mr. Thumbscrew, Junr., was a tall, lank young man, with a very "pious, ministerial air about him," to use the words of *Zion's Trumpet*, which had just published his portrait, with a brief sketch of his college career and his capabilities to fill pulpits. His features were not good, and he had a sly, sinister look about eyes and mouth, which to a keen observer suggested more of the hypocrite than the saint. His hair was brushed very smoothly over his low forehead, so as nearly to conceal the little forehead which Nature had been lavish enough to bestow upon him. His voice was soft and oily; he really reminded one of an eel rather than of any other creature; he was a slippery sort of a customer altogether, and without being really deep or profound in argument, he had a clever knack of getting round a question without touching it, and impressed the easily-led by his air of "unmistakable piety," rather than by his scholarship or erudition, which though supposed to be great, was not, in reality, up to the average standard among Congregationalist ministers of to-day.

His uncle was a tall, wiry old man, between sixty and seventy, with a sharp, clear voice, rasping rather than sympathetic, but with a marvellous command of language, and a great air of self-importance about him, which made

many shallow persons mistake verbosity for eloquence, and dogmatic self-assurance and priggish conceit, for a deep insight into every theological question he essayed to handle.

The Thumbscrews were theologians, and nothing else. They had very few sympathies in common with the rest of mankind. They were not tender-hearted and gently persuasive ; they were orthodox and arbitrary in the extreme. Polyglot Bibles, Concordances, Lexicons, controversial treatises, added to the patristic writings, constituted the bulk of their library. They had neither wit nor humour. They were neither pathetic nor amusing. Their sermons were dry, dogmatical harangues, in which there was a great spicing of Greek and Hebrew. People thought them learned, more because they did not know how to effectually answer them than because they felt an inward response to their teachings.

The Mount St. Michaels were in the drawing-room of Lady Cardwool, on the evening of this particular *soirée*, and all unknown to the respective parties. Bertha had been specially invited, in order that being called upon to speak, her utterances might provoke controversy and compel Mr. Bruin to commit himself. How little these planners and schemers knew with whom they had to deal !

Bertha was controlled at the appointed time, and instead of calling for questions, as was customary when she spoke at evening gatherings of this sort, her spirit-guides proceeded to lecture some parties present upon the motives with which they had come together. The far-seeing spirit described with perfect accuracy Mr. Thumbscrew's aspirations, and gave full particulars about the uncle's yearning desire to get his nephew into a pulpit, at present occupied. No names were mentioned, but the blows struck home.

The Thumbscrews were dumbfounded ; this might upset all their carefully laid plans, because however unfounded statements may be, not even a rumour can get out that people are plotting, without setting hosts of curious eyes to watch the hatching of the plot.

Mr. Bruin laughed heartily at the adroitness of the spirit. Not a word was said which need have been taken up by any one present, but everybody knew who the parties were, who were alluded to anonymously. No one dared to inquire, no one dared to show offence, for had any one have done so, he

would have been at once spotted as a culprit, and thus have brought suspicion upon his own devoted head.

"Very curious, very singular! I wonder what this is all about?" said the accomplices, one to the other, in the hearing of others.

Poor, innocent creatures! they could not pull the wool over everybody's eyes anyway, for from that evening the Thumb-screws were more unpopular than previously, with all Mr. Bruin's sympathizers, at least, of whom there were many in the room on that particular occasion.

The matter was laughed off that evening. Bertha and her brother sang divinely, and then Bertha improvised poems, one after the other, on all kinds of subjects, to the amazement of all, to the delight of most, and to the chagrin of the Thumb-screws and Mount St. Michaels, who, like all designing people, are afraid that the spirits, if they can communicate, may possibly know more about their doings than they would like to see the light.

People must have queer ideas about poetry, to judge from the subjects given to "Monadonah," Bertha's poetic control, that evening. "A corkscrew" was one suggested by a lady of title. Lady Cardwool herself suggested "an elephant's trunk." Mr. Thumbscrew suggested "a lock of hair," and Mrs. Mount St. Michael, "a pin-cushion." Upon these various irrelevant topics, however, "Monadonah," poured forth verse sublime, freighted with pearls of wisdom gathered from the depths of the spiritual seas, over which she glided in her swift canoe through oceans of space, to answer to the call of those who invoked her presence on earth.

Mr. Bruin really courted a trial for heresy, and thus in order to throw the gauntlet and invite a challenge from the enemy, he got up, as Bertha's sweet voice died away in gentle strains of angelic benediction ere her spirit-guide relinquished her hold upon her organism, and uttered the following words, which were taken down in short-hand by a gentleman who thought them worthy of preservation. As coming from the pastor of an evangelical church, they are valuable, to say the least, as an indication of the drift of modern thought among ministers, who have the courage of their convictions:—

"I had no intention of airing any of my opinions here this evening, and least of all had I prepared myself to express any ideas on the subject of Spiritualism. I know that some

persons have undertaken to call me a Spiritualist, probably because I have frequently declared my conviction that there is very much in what are commonly called spirit-manifestations, which cannot be attributed by any rational mind to trickery or imposture, or to his Satanic Majesty, of whom some of my brethren seem to stand in such terrible awe, whenever the word Spiritualism is mentioned in their hearing. What has occurred here this evening is enough to convince any sane individual, that some intelligence is at work beyond that of the young lady who has just poured forth such wondrous prose and poetry. No girl of eighteen, in her normal condition, can do what has been done here to-night. Our professors cannot approach the prose, to say nothing of the poetry. Now it is a fact, that the thing is done. How is it done : by what agency ? every intelligent mind will be led to inquire. I do not call myself a Spiritualist, simply because I have had no such conclusive proof of the spiritual agency said to be at work, as to completely satisfy my mind as to the source whence the ideas and language emanate. I must say, however, that I am favourably disposed toward the Spiritualistic theory. To my mind, the philosophy to which we have listened to-night, is not only admirable and elevating, but it is far purer and deeper than that to which we are accustomed to listen, or to read ; and as for the poetry, if it is not inspired, its production is an incomprehensible mystery. I may say boldly, that if the views of life hereafter, expressed here this evening, are untrue, our conscience and our reason alike tell us they ought to be true; and what is more, that they must be true, if there be a perfectly just God ruling over all. I cannot see how any one with a grain of common sense, can imagine collusion in such a case as this ; and as to memory, it cannot be called in to improvise upon all kinds of subjects, such as Miss Thrushleigh has had presented to her this evening. I know some people want poems upon hair-brushes and pin-cushions, and such things, and I have often been amazed at the readiness with which such unpoetical subjects can be treated in beautiful verse, and what sublime ideas are suggested to us when we listen to the handling of such topics by a gifted lady like the one to whom we have listened with such pleasure, and I hope profit, also, to-night ; but for my part, I must confess that her treatment of the subject I gave her—"Homer's Iliad and

"Odyssey"—was the master-piece, as it displayed a knowledge of the books, and of Greek history, philosophy, and mythology, simply astounding in a girl of Miss Thrushleigh's years. I have been to the Caveblock rooms in years gone by, and heard Mrs. Aurora Bergen deliver lectures, to which I have listened spell-bound, wondering if it were possible for any mortal woman, unaided by spirit influence, to rise to such transcendent heights of eloquence. I know that there are many puerilities, and I believe many impositions, associated with what is known as Modern Spiritualism, but in spite of this, I am compelled to admit, that very much that is attributed to the spirit-world is really quite in keeping with what we should look for from intelligences further advanced than ourselves. I have no antipathy to the word Spiritualism, I have no prejudice against the system. Indeed, it seems to me quite natural, and thoroughly in accord with Scripture testimony, for beings from the other world to make known their presence to us. I cannot think of my dear friends who loved me on earth, and who have passed through the change called death, as dwelling far away in some shadowy and fabled heaven, where every earthly tie is forgotten and outgrown. What I have seen to-night, and on previous occasions, also, has led me to the conclusion, that not only is there something in Spiritualism, but there is something good in it. I can only say, in conclusion, that were it not for the scruples of some of my congregation, and the binding nature of the title deeds of Parade Street Chapel, I should invite this young lady into my pulpit, and there I am sure she would edify and charm all who would flock to hear her."

After this championship of Spiritualism, Mr. Bruin looked straight into the eyes of Dr. Calvin Thumbscrew and his nephew, as much as to say: I am not ashamed of my convictions, and you can do your best to oust me from Parade Street Chapel; but you will never make me afraid of groveling hypocrites like you.

Dr. Thumbscrew felt the keen, penetrating gaze, and smarted under it. He inwardly felt that the man who looked at him so calmly and defiantly, was vastly his superior both intellectually and morally; and though Dr. Thumbscrew hummed and hawed and cleared his throat, and got up in his pompous style to express his views upon the subject, he was at heart a coward, and anything but enjoyed having

so brave and strong a character as Mr. Bruin's to wrestle with.

"My dear, believing, Christian friends, washed from your sins in the all-cleansing blood of the immaculate Lamb of God, slain for you on Calvary! Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Let no man defile you with enticing words. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. I fall back upon God's word, and out of it do I learn that communion with spirits, even though possible, is communion with the powers of darkness. I know not, I dare not, judge whether what we have listened to this evening, from the lips of Miss Thrushleigh, has emanated from the spirit-world or not. I hope it has only been an exhibition of what our great scientist, Professor Woodsawyer, calls 'unconscious cerebration.' Even if it is this, I tremble for the fate of those who prefer the unconscious action of man's defiled, depraved mind, to the enunciations of God's Holy Spirit. I know I'm an old man, and an old-fashioned theologian. I have chosen the old ways, nay, rather, should I say, God's Holy Spirit has constrained me to tread in them, and in the only one way which leads to heaven, am I walking, leaning upon Jesus. I have only risen to express my grief and consternation at the rationalism of Mr. Bruin, whom I yearn over as a younger brother in the ministry, and one who, with his great talent for attracting a crowd, must be the means of drawing many to righteousness or of hurrying them to the bottomless pit. I could not rest without rising to defend the Gospel of Christ, and putting my veto upon the accursed thing called Modern Spiritualism. May God add his blessing to the words of his dust, uttered in defence of his Gospel.—Amen."

It is not be wondered at, that these pompous and insulting words, cloaked in the guise of religious fervour, should draw forth a hearty burst of opposition from all present, except the few satellites who revolved round Dr. Thumserew, like moths around the candle, allowing the "pious and learned doctor" to sing their wings and even burn them off if he pleased, with his dogmatism and his sophistries, until they had no power to fly beyond the low level of creed-bound superstition, where he held all his followers in his vice-like grip.

"How excessively ungentlemanly: I shall never invite

him to my house again," said Lady Cardwool, quite audibly, to a friend, so that her words were distinctly audible to the Doctor and his nephew, who assumed a dying-duck-in-a-thunderstorm sort of air, as though they were carrying a very heavy cross, and were cruelly persecuted by this vain, wicked world, because they stood up for Jesus. Whereas, should Jesus come to earth again, the Thumbscrews would be among the first to ostracise him, and were it not for the restraints of civilized legislation, the gibbet would be none too good for him if he got into their hands.

Signor Vulpi, who never stood on ceremony when his feelings were aroused, went directly up to Thumbscrew, Senr., and said to him in clear, penetrating tones:—

"Sir, you have paid my sister a compliment, and I am very glad. I am something of a Spiritualist myself, if for no other reason than I thereby incur your disapproval. The friendship of such a man as yourself, would be enough to blight a person's whole being. To incur your enmity is something worth striving for, as one has to be in some degree honest and sensible to win your disapprobation."

At this impudent and audacious speech, some even of Bertha's friends looked astounded, but Lady Armadale, who had been boiling over with indignation for some time, could not restrain herself from giving Victor a hearty shake of the hand, and saying to him,

"I admire you for your spirit."

Mr. Bruin, being appealed to, said, very quietly,

"Oh! it's only a way he has. A few Sundays ago, he announced that he would preach upon "The man of Sin," and he took one of my sermons into his pulpit, and preached steadily for an hour against me. That's what he calls 'preaching the Gospel.' God forbid that I should be an orthodox preacher, if that's orthodoxy; and yet, perhaps, the poor fellow is deluded, and thinks he's doing God service when he abuses his fellow creatures. I dare say, when my trial for heresy comes off, I shall have to leave Parade Street, but if they do get me out, the world will know the reason why, as the trial will be made thoroughly public, and perhaps the agitation of thought it will produce will do more than anything else for the liberalization of public sentiment. As I have said, I don't call myself a Spiritualist, but I shall, the

very moment I'm quite sure it's true. I may say, to-night, that I hope it's true, and I almost believe it is. I just want thoroughly convincing, and then, won't I preach it!"

Lady Cardwool, who was a Unitarian, though she heartily disagreed with Dr. Thumbscrew, could not go the whole way with Lady Armadale in her Spiritualism, though the two ladies were near neighbours and intimate friends.

The party, after talking, till the small hours, went to their respective homes, to dream of spirits and trials for heresy, until the next day's business called their attention to other matters, till the storm finally broke, as our readers will learn it did soon.



## CHAPTER XVII.

## IN TENEBRÆ LUCIS.

IT is now just two years since our story opened. Again it is the week before Easter; again the churches are being crowded with the faithful, and the unfaithful alike, who come to participate in, or to witness, as the case may be, the solemnities of Holy Week.

The Church of S. Eustache, at Knightsbridge, is open day and night, and pilgrims from far and near are coming to pay their vows before the crucifix, which has received a special Papal blessing in Rome, and has been sent to England on purpose to add greater sanctity to this specially-indulged church.

The *Tenebrae* office this year was to be performed with more than usually solemn splendour. The stations of the Cross, and all the other pictures and images in the church, were heavily draped in dark violet cloth, and the splendid altars were completely covered with the same material.

Victor and Bertha were to sing the *Miserere*, without accompaniment, on Holy Thursday, and the solos in the service of the Three Hours' Agony on Good Friday.

Since Bertha and her brother had been together, the mysterious tenor voice, accompanying Bertha's, had not been heard, somewhat to the disappointment of Dr. Kneeswell and others, who valued this phase of spirit-manifestation very highly, though they did not pretend to understand it.

On Holy Thursday, or as it is sometimes called Maundy Thursday, Victor had a sudden attack of indisposition. He was not ill,—he always maintained, and that truthfully, that he was never in bad health,—but being a young gentleman who sought his own ease and comfort in everything, as he was feeling tired and the night was cold, he felt indisposed to go to church; though it was a mystery to every one how the elaborate tenor solos would be sustained by the incompetent young man, with a thin, quavering voice, whom Victor requested to accompany Bertha to and from the church, and substitute for him in the choir.

The service was to commence at 7.30. It was now four o'clock, and Victor and Bertha were sitting together in a little room, called by way of compliment the library. They were still at Silvern Terrace. Mrs. Sweetgeese was either ill or pretended to be, and since Bertha's return from Paris, she had not interfered much with her niece's management, as she had by this time learned, that she must either put up with Bertha's brother, or close her house, as she could neither keep a boarder nor a servant when she took the reins of government into her own hands.

"Let's have a sitting, and see what the spirits have to say to us," suggested Victor. "I feel awfully unwilling to go out this cold night, and something seems to tell me that if I stay here, lying on this sofa, while the service is proceeding in the church, you will be able to sing all the tenor solos, as well as your own parts. You know what wonderful things I have been told about Knaresbrook, and your performances in Bayswater just before we found each other. Since I have been with you, we have never heard the mysterious tenor through you. Let's have a try with the piano now. I'll play the accompaniment to one of the tenor solos in the *Miserere*, and perhaps we shall hear you suddenly breaking out into a rich, full, manly voice."

The experiment was tried three or four times over, till it seemed as though it were useless to make further attempts, when suddenly Bertha's whole aspect changed. Her features underwent a complete transformation, and then seating herself at the piano, she ran her fingers once or twice swiftly over the keys, and burst forth in strains of song worthy of the heaviest-salaried tenor of the age. Then the soprano notes would rise and fall, in softest, sweetest cadence; then the tenor would again be heard alone, till at last the *Gloria Patri* was reached, and the room seemed full of a choir of invisible musicians, all chanting divinely Meyerbeer's sublime harmony.

The whole house and many passers-by were arrested in their walks or their duties, wondering whence such a burst of song could possibly emanate. It was literally a strain of music, so mighty, so grand, so clear, that even sorrows were silenced, and hearts stood still to hear. "It rose in harmonious rushings of mingled voices and strings," to quote from Adelaide Proctor's sublime poem, "The Message,"

which Bertha and Victor were both very fond of singing to Blumenthal's soul-stirring music.

The voices ceased, and Bertha threw herself down on the sofa, breathing heavily. Then her lips were moved to speak, and the great Italian tenor, who died of apoplexy in the Opera House in Milan, over whom the world had gone into mourning, declared how he had taken Senora Lagrymas (Bertha's mother) upon his knee when she was a child, and how, when she grew to woman's estate, they had sung together all over Italy; two stars of equal magnitude, though each one shone with its own peculiar brightness.

Senora Lagrymas had been tenderly attached to the great singer, though they were not lovers or betrothed. He was older than she by several years, and was himself a married man, though unhappily mated. Now, in spirit-life they were together, not as counterparts, only as dear friends, united in strongest bonds of devotion to the glorious art they both so rapturously adored.

Bertha was next controlled by her mother, and Victor little knew what could be the meaning of the tears which Bertha shed in the trance, as her mother urged Victor to try and make the girl as independent of him as possible, as she might soon have to encounter the storms of this bleak world, with no protector at her side.

When we are young, and buoyant, and prosperous, and everything seems settled on foundations as stable as the granite rock, it is hard for us to realize that some great and awful change is about to overtake us. But does not the earthquake come, often without giving anybody warning? When a volcano is on the point of belching forth volleys of burning smoke and lava, it often seems completely in repose. Thunders are heard on the clearest evenings, and fearful storms convulse the earth, and rend the air with scarcely a premonitory signal; and as in outer nature, so in the affairs of men, so with the destinies of human lives; the greatest changes, both for weal and woe, come upon us when we have least reason to expect them. May we not trust in a wise, loving, and all-seeing Providence, which gives us no warning when the blow is about to fall and is inevitable, because crosses and losses are hard enough to bear when they come, and did we know of their approach we should borrow such an amount of trouble, that our days of ease and comfort

would all be blighted, and we ourselves unnerved, by anticipating sorrow, to stand up against the thunderbolt when it fell. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," and, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be," are texts full of such sound philosophy, that the Christian and the Sceptic may unite in admiring the sagacious love of the mind which was their originator, no matter who he may have been, or in what age or clime he may have lived.

Bertha awoke from the trance in tears, which her brother had some difficulty in drying. She evidently was weighted down with some presentiment of coming misfortune she could not thrust aside.

Does it not seem as though some merciful dispensation of providence often takes us in our sleep among the scenes we are about to visit, and there introduces us to the events which are about to alter all our earthly career? In dreams nothing seems to shock us or take us by surprise, and then when the blow falls, though we may not have been really expecting it, we seem to profit by some almost-forgotten dream-life experience, which has made us stronger to stand up against the chill blast of adversity.

Things were going too smoothly, perhaps, with Bertha and her brother. They were walking together up the hill of life, on a carpet of down, plucking only roses by the way-side. But how few are the roses which have no thorns! There are moss-roses, which are without them, and these are the fairest and the choicest, the sweetest and most delicate of all the families of roses. But moss-roses are only for souls which have been pricked with the sharp thorns of earthly sorrow, and are now ready to receive that reward of peaceful calm and blest content, which is reserved only for those who are faithful unto death: faithful until everything but love and all the virtues have died within them, and they are prepared for the resurrection from strife and pain, into that holy and serene atmosphere of unmixed joy, which the angels in the celestial heavens, who are all unselfish love and heavenly wisdom, alone can know.

These beautiful words which we have introduced as a sort of brief meditation here, form part of an incomparably beautiful trance address, delivered through Bertha's organism about this time. Did our limited space allow of it, we should interweave some of these sublime addresses with our narrative;

but the size of this little volume will be quite ample enough as it is, and if this little book receives the kindly welcome at the hands of the public we anticipate for it, another volume may be issued as a sequel to this, in which some of those marvellous utterances may appear intact, as they were reported verbatim by a competent stenographer, and only await the call of the public ere they see the light.

Seven o'clock came, the carriage drove up to the door, with the young gentleman in it who was, to speak the truth, a mock singer, as he always stood up in a choir to make one more when the attendance of choristers was sparse. But his voice was wholly inarticulate, except on rare occasions when a very faint, low, murmur just escaped his parted lips.

As the cab drove up at the entrance to S. Eustache, though the great heavy bell was prevented by the church's decree from tolling out its sonorous appeal, the faithful had congregated in densest crowds within the sacred precincts, to commemorate the death of the mighty Son of God, the Saviour of mankind. The morning offices of the day had been very solemn, but gorgeous. No wonder Victor was tired, and preferred to remain at home this evening, as he had sung fifty-three solos during the elaborate offices that morning; while Bertha's work had been much lighter, as soprano voices were not so much in demand at that particular service until the Mass had ended, and then, as the priests were preparing to take the Blessed Sacrament to the altar of repose in the Lady Chapel, Bertha had sung Rossini's "*O Salutaris*," as it had never been heard before in England, within the limited recollection of any one living, at least.

This evening the church was densely packed. The high altar was in shadow; the six tall candles, with their immense candlesticks draped in sombre purple, gleamed out alone, while the candelabra with fifteen candles, lighted only for *Tenebrae*, looked almost ghastly as it shone forth in the heavily-draped sanctuary. At the side altars there were no lights, all the statues and pictures were covered, but in the Lady Chapel there was a representation of Paradise. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed, surrounded with five hundred wax tapers brightly burning, and forty-eight young girls and women dressed in snowy white, with garlands on their heads, keeping watch as though they might be angels at the Sepulchre. All the rare exotics which could be found in

London were blooming in tropical luxuriance before the sacred shrine. The Stage utterly fails to produce the scenic effects the Church produces on great occasions, where wealth is freely placed at its disposal.

All the rest of the church represented the house of Israel, which was sunk in the darkness of sin, preparing to crucify its Master. The sanctuary from which the host had been removed represented the holy city of Jerusalem, which had stoned its prophets, and now would crucify its God, whose presence sin had driven from the Temple; while away off in the Lady Chapel, the lights and the flowers and the earnest adorations pictured the love which the few faithful ones had borne him, when all the rest of mankind had turned against him.

The service was unspeakably impressive. It was all in Latin, and comparatively few present followed it in their books, which had an English translation on the page opposite the Latin text. Those who did follow the words, were not rewarded for their trouble. It was a service to dream through and to be impressed by, but not to follow word for word understandingly.

The organ, as were the bells, was silenced, but stringed instruments had been provided; and in the gallery, where the singers were, harp, violin, and 'cello added much to the harmonies poured forth by an immense choir of selected singers from three opera companies then in town. Fifty priests and boys in the sanctuary sang the psalms and antiphons, antiphonally with the large choir in the gallery at the other end of the church. The candles were extinguished one by one, as psalm after psalm was chanted, to symbolize the defection of the disciples who forsook their Master in his hour of bitter need.

So far the choruses had done everything, but before the *Miserere* there was to be a sermon, and the priest who was to preach that evening being unusually devout, knelt longer than usual before ascending the pulpit stairs. What made her do it she could never tell, as it had not been put down on the choir notice, but just before the priest rose from his knees, Bertha commenced singing, without any accompaniment, the grand old hymn, "*Veni Creator Spiritus*," and she sang it in English out of the child's hymn-book, to the old Roman melody to which the multitude

chant it in Italy. She had never heard the air in her life, and yet she sang it verse after verse, seven verses in all, L.M., while the vast multitude below kept on their knees as though affected by some magic spell.

Father Præstiti was an Italian by birth, and the quaint, old melody stirred him to his very soul, awakening within him long-buried recollections of the time when he, as a little boy, used to sing that same old air in the *Sancto del Spirito*, in Florence.

Father Præstiti was a great theologian, and had come to S. Eustache that evening intending to preach a severe doctrinal sermon on Transubstantiation. Great things were expected of him, and as so many heretics were present, and Maunday Thursday is the anniversary of the institution of the Lord's Supper, the dignitaries at S. Eustache agreed among themselves to invite to their pulpit on that evening an ecclesiastic of unquestioned eminence, who by his impassioned eloquence might win the hearts and enthrall the judgment of those who might remain obdurate in the hands of a less gifted orator.

Father Præstiti's manner was usually imperious, stern, and dogmatic. What then must have been the surprise of the vast congregation, when with faltering accents, tremulous as those of a diffident and tearful child, the great preacher gave out, not "This is my body," but "Father! forgive them, for they know not what they do."

He pictured the man of Calvary, as a loving mother brooding over her wayward children, sighing to draw them to her breast. He attributed human transgression to human ignorance and weakness, and told the multitude before them how blasphemous it was on their part, to pass judgment on the motives of their brethren, and condemn those for whom Jesus lovingly prayed and whom he heartily forgave. He contrasted the petty annoyances and vexations we have to bear, with the heavy cross which Jesus carried, and, in view of that cross, who could be found hard and unrelenting enough to harbour resentment against any human being.

Any one might have preached that sermon: it would have come gracefully from the lips of Dr. Chapin, of New York, or John Page Hopps, of Leicester. It was a sermon from the soul to the soul. It practically destroyed sects and parties, and though it was decidedly Catholic, it was certainly not Ultramontane. If anybody left the church that night un-

moved and unblessed, he must, indeed, have had a stone in his bosom in place of a heart.

The sermon lasted an hour: people thought it had been less than one-fourth that time.

The stringed instruments sounded out the opening strains of the *Miserere*, then they died away gradually into a silence that might be felt. Then arose the voice of Senora Lagrymas, singing through the entranced Bertha, who stood in the gallery with her hands clasped upon her breast, no music before her. The intricate melodies, as sung that night in the Cistine chapel of the Vatican, in Rome, were faultlessly sustained with a power and compass rendering every note as audible at the altar, 130 feet away, as in the organ-loft where the singer stood. Then arose those wonderful tenor strains, which at Knaresbrook and at Bayswater had so astounded and enraptured the multitude. They seemed to travel all about the church, as though they came out of the timbers of the roof; out from the clerestory windows, out from the solid marble pillars which supported the roof, even from under the altar, as though they were the voices of the souls whom John beheld in apocalyptic vision. Then the pure soprano sang "*Asperges me domine hyssoppo et mundabor lavabis me et super nivem dealbabor.*" It was as the voice of an angel, white already, petitioning the Eternal to make her whiter still.

All who heard it, caught new inspirations from the realm of spirit. Not one in the vast assembly could quite refrain from tears. Cheeks which had known no moisture from refreshing tears for twenty years or more, were bathed in briny drops. And the emotion thus excited was not sentimental and purposeless: it was the opening up of the better nature in them, the unlocking of the flood-gates of the soul.

Many were the kindly actions performed on the way home, by those who had assisted at *Tenebrae* in S. Eustache that night. Many were the poor, lorn beggars who found pieces of silver surreptitiously dropped into their freezing palms, by hurrying passers by. Many were the little flower-sellers and match-sellers, who sold their last bunches of violets and their last boxes of vestas for three times the amount asked for them, to people who did not want either flowers or matches, but were touched by the blue, cold hands and faces of the little wanderers in the London streets; and many were

the poor, shelterless creatures who were housed that night, and placed by warm fires and wrapped in cozy blankets, by hearts who had been touched at S. Eustache ; and many were the injuries forgiven and forgotten, many the restitutions made, many the breaches healed.

That was a wonderful night. The first-born sons of crime were slaughtered by the angel who passed over the city. Souls were redeemed, lives were saved, sins forgiven, vices, jealousies, and all the tribe of evil birds which pollute the human sanctuary and are the real enemies of mankind, against whom we must wage perpetual warfare, were crushed to rise no more. And as the Jews were about to celebrate deliverance from the Land of Egypt and the House of Bondage, and the Christians were preparing to commemorate the death and burial of him who died that man might live, the ceremonies bore a new meaning : new light broke in upon many a doubting, despairing, and unforgiving heart, for it was indeed a great and wonderful night, in which the power of the Eternal shone forth in the utter discomfiture and de-thronement of many an evil, and the installation on the throne of power, of much genuine peace and good-will among men.

High and holy spirits tell us that there are certain days and hours when the powers of holiness seem to possess the field, and maintain an undivided sway ; and that these hours are special occasions for the sowing of spiritual seed, and the reaping of moral harvests. At such times all seers and seeresses are peculiarly inspired, and the world experiences a pentecostal shower of heavenly grace.

Let no one bring to bear upon this subject the crude logic of materialistic unbelief. The soul is its own witness and its own interpreter. Those who have had spiritual experiences, can be quite as sure of them as any Atheist can be that he has seen a cow or eaten a piece of plum-pudding. Man has a spiritual nature with spiritual faculties, sometimes if not always on the alert, and to these senses of the soul absolute evidence of immortal truths may be brought with overwhelming power, and the external test that the soul has been touched is, when the outward life is improved, and hands and tongue perform sweet offices of love.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## WHO ARE THE HERETICS ?

AGAIN it is Easter Sunday, just two years since our story opens ; not exactly two years by the day of the month, but two years according to the Church's calendar, which is a lineal descendant of calendars so ancient that they are lost among the buried ruins of those old-world civilizations, which are being brought to the notice of our chronologists, not only by the discovery of most singular and interesting remains of buried cities, in a remarkable state of preservation, all over Central America, but by the yet more recent discoveries of men whose researches have led Ignatius Donnelly, of Minnesota, U.S.A., to publish a book entitled "Atlantis," which is giving a vestment of history to the statements made by Solon and Plato, in Athens, between 2,000 and 3,000 years ago.

No study is more interesting than that of the Progress of Religious Ideas through the centuries. Lydia Maria Child has made all students her debtor, by publishing a wonderful work in three volumes, with that title, which can be obtained of any first-class bookseller, and will well repay most careful and patient perusal. But far behind the ages dealt with by Mrs. Child, there are cycles of time lost in the night of what is termed the pre-historic period, and that period is simply all periods ante-dating the ages concerning which Herodotus, the father of—correctly speaking—modern history, wrote.

Probably because he delighted himself with the results of antiquarian study, and being a man who hated to monopolize knowledge and heap up treasures as his own emolument, while his neighbours languished in ignorance, Mr. Howard Bruin, Minister of Parade Street Chapel, undertook to preach upon "The Natural and the Theological Easter," in the pulpit of that celebrated fane, on the Easter Sunday of which we are now writing.

Parade Street Chapel was usually full, especially in the evening ; particularly when Mr. Bruin intrenched upon the

forbidden ground of politics, in which many of his Sunday evening hearers were more interested than in theology.

Mr. Bruin had a sad habit of kicking over the traces : he spoke sometimes from notes, but oftener quite extemporaneously. He very seldom wrote out a sermon, and when he did, he rarely could preach it as it was written. The wants of the concourse of people before him seemed to enter into his very soul and brain, and compelled him to give them daily bread for daily needs. His prayers were wonderful. People who had heard Theodore Parker, in Boston, U.S.A., in the palmiest days of his ministry in Music Hall, said that Mr. Bruin's prayers reminded them of Parker's, more than any to which they had ever listened since Parker had left the mortal side of life.

Spiritualists were frequent attendants upon Mr. Bruin's ministry, and on one Sunday morning, particularly,—it was on the occasion of the passing to spirit-life of the celebrated American, Judge Edmonds,—a gentleman went to Parade Street to hear Mr. Bruin in the morning, and in the evening to Caveblock Rooms, to hear Mrs. Lavinia Coral, whose control that evening announced himself as Parker. This gentleman detected Parker's style and sentiments through the whole of Mr. Bruin's sermon, and then what was his surprise and delight, at hearing the self-same striking words and characteristic sentences through Mrs. Coral, on the same evening.

Mentioning the circumstance to Mr. Bruin, in a private conversation held with him some weeks afterwards, the reverend gentleman smiled most affably and understandingly, though his only reply in words was :—

"I hold Parker's works in very high esteem. I have gathered much that is good from them, and if he can help me to proclaim the news that God is love, I shall thank God for granting me the assistance of so highly-endowed a member of his family."

An admission, you may say, that he knew that Parker controlled or assisted him in the pulpit; surely a man who could pronounce such words as these about a man whose heresies offended even the Unitarians, must stand very far out indeed on the rock of religious liberalism.

On this particular Easter Sunday morning, the chapel was so densely crowded, that forms were brought in from the ad-

joining school-room and placed back to back down the centre aisle, while every available crevice was filled with chairs, which were eagerly seized, immediately the public were admitted to the chapel.

Mr. Bruin was an artist and an aethete, therefore, he loved simple and appropriate decoration. He would have scorned the aestheticism which carries lilies and sunflowers, like the mock poets and love-sick maidens in the comic opera "Patience," or that of the Cimabue Brown family, who figured so prominently in the columns of "Punch" during the reign of the aesthetic craze in London, and whose aestheticism led the Cimabue Brown children to put out their tongues at all children who were not aesthetic.

Mr. Bruin's idea of aestheticism was "excellence." He quite agreed with the translators of the New Testament, when they translated the Greek word *aesthetic* "excellent." "Approve those things which are *aesthetic*" (excellent). To him flowers were excellent, and so he had them all around his pulpit, and on this Easter morning, the chapel presented a beautiful appearance, decorated as it was by loving hands, with all the choicest, rarest, simplest blossoms of the spring, the members of his flock had been able to bring together to grace the sanctuary.

The flowers which Mr. Bruin prized the most were not the gorgeous blossoms reared by the practised hand of some heavily-paid gardener, who looked after the green-houses belonging to some show house in Belgravia. The Sunday School children who brought the crocuses, and violets, and daffodils gave him the greatest pleasure, and these simple offerings, so artlessly yet tastefully displayed, cheered his heart as diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, or rubies from the mine could never have done. This strong, vigorous man was as a little child in innocent simplicity of taste and habit, and as a little child he found the kingdom of heaven and its angels found him, and people felt his royal nobility wherever and whenever they approached him.

The Easter hymns and canticles were sung, the Scripture lesson read, which detailed the rising of Jesus from the tomb; an anthem was finely rendered by the well-trained choir, and then after a prayer, so touching, so all-inclusive, so natural, so human, and yet so divine that it brought heaven down to earth and then carried earth up to heaven, Mr. Bruin com-

menced his sermon : and what a sermon it was ! Such scholarship had never been displayed in Parade Steet Chapel previously, and we are sure it has never been displayed since the pulpit has been filled, or rather left empty, with Mr. Thumbscrew, Junr., as successor to Mr. Bruin, who was long since hounded out of the Congregational Union on charge of heresy.

The Mount St. Michaels "criticized" Mr. Bruin's discourse ; so did two of the trustees, one of whom spelt heaven "evan," and had no idea he was outraging the feelings of Lindley Murray, when he said,

"I must say, as to my mind there ain't no difference 'twixt them there sermons as we've been a 'aving in this ere horthodox Congregational Church, and the rot that there old villin Courtland preaches at the Sembly Rooms in Hislington, where they does 'ave the decency to call theirselves Seclarists."

Such eminent grammarians usually sit in judgment over ministers of ripe culture, and as trustees and deacons rule chapels. These "elders of the church" usually manage to oust the best men in a denomination, while the really talented men work in a wider field, after they have disconnected themselves from sectarianism. The sects dwindle down into centres of gossip and tittle-tattle, and the drooping energies of the churches have to be revived by men and women walking backwards through the streets, beating time to Sankey's hymns with an old gingham umbrella. What a pity it is, that culture is so fearfully discounted in many religious centres! It is a very good thing to go out into the highways and hedges, and compel the lowest and vilest to come in to the church, but not until such men as those of Mr. Bruin's type hold positions of honour in the churches, will the Church exert any permanent sway over the educated youth of the country.

Mr. Bruin undermined no foundation of real religion ; he merely discriminated between chaff and wheat ; and while he mercilessly burned the former, he lovingly and studiously conserved every grain of the latter. He certainly told his hearers that he never expected to hear the shrill blast of Gabriel's trump awake the slumbering ashes of the dead, as the poet Young seemingly expected to hear it. To him the resurrection was a spiritual triumph, a victory of the soul over the senses, a stamping out of all that is base and sensual in our

nature, till the soul completely dominates the senses. How beautifully he spoke of the resurrection, and the evidences of our immortality ! How convincingly he appealed to all the facts and analogies of nature, and the actual experiences of human life, to demonstrate the existence of man as a spiritual entity !

Because he believed in a God too vast to be defined on paper, they accused him of being an atheist. Because he acknowledged a universal revelation, his opponents declared he threw discredit on the Word of God. Because he heard God always speaking, they said he denied that God ever spoke at all. Because he saw God revealing his goodness everywhere, they brought an action against him for declaring that God revealed himself nowhere, and through no one. And so all through the charges brought against him, the poor, blind bats, who were dazzled, it may be, with the brilliant light this royal-eyed eagle could perceive, declared that the eagle who gazed unabashed upon the sun at noon-day, denied that there was any sun at all to gaze upon ; and thus it was their duty to scourge him and put him out of their synagogue.

If the morning sermon created an uproar, the address to children in the afternoon increased the flame, while the evening lecture capped the climax.

It was Mr. Bruin's custom to have a Children's Service in the chapel every Sunday afternoon, lasting exactly an hour, from three till four o'clock. The children assembled in the school-room at half-past two, to practise singing, then at five minutes to three they filed into the chapel in orderly procession, the organ playing a grand march, as they took their places in the body of the house. The side pews, and the galleries were thrown open to everybody. Punctually at three o'clock, Mr. Bruin appeared, and gave out a hymn, in which all the children joined. Then he offered a brief, ejaculatory prayer, followed by the Lord's Prayer, in which all joined. Then they sang an anthem, and wonderfully well these juvenile songsters took their parts. Then Mr. Bruin told them a story, after which they sang again. Then came half-an-hour's catechizing. He catechized the children, and the children catechized him. Their was no familiarity, but there was perfect frankness, perfect outspokenness on the part of teacher and scholars alike.

On this Easter Day, they asked him about the resurrection. They told him of their difficulties, and he met them, and, as far as he could, he dispelled them. Then he told them to come into his vestry on the following Saturday, and he would lend them some nice books, and have a chat with them.

Oh! how the children loved this kind, sensible, tender-hearted pastor. When he left the chapel, the attendance at the children's service became so reduced, that it was soon discontinued altogether; but on this Easter Day, the chapel was, if possible, even fuller than in the morning. Children, and grown people, too, would come from all parts to this celebrated service, and when the clock struck four, and they sang their closing hymn, and Mr. Bruin dismissed them with an almost heavenly blessing, many would positively weep because a whole week must elapse before such a season of instruction and refreshment would return. There was no forced attendance upon this service, no pulling out of watches and looking at the clock, as though they wished it over: it was all too short, but it was so full and so helpful, that in that single hour there seemed to be condensed a whole year of spiritual experience.

The evening service was at 6.30, but by six o'clock the chapel was so densely crowded that the doors had to be forcibly closed to prevent a panic. Seat-holders were admitted by a side door, through the vestry. Mr. Bruin's text was the well-known passage so often quoted by the Universalists: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

No wonder the deacons were up in arms this time. The audacity of the preacher was almost incredible. He must have known how he was staking everything that night, by promulgating such views in such a place. But he was a man who despised compromises; he was no time-server, no politic tactician, who could be all things to all men in order to win the approbation of all, and thus comfortably feather his own nest, through the patronage of all. Like Elijah on Mount Carmel, confronting the prophets of Baal, he could stand alone, majestic in his isolation as a witness to the truth, though 10,000 were against him.

Though many advanced preachers have been bold and conscientious enough to secede from the sects which were too narrow and creed-bound to allow of the new wine of pro-

gressive thought fermenting in the old skins without bursting them, many of these men have displayed such agnostic propensities, that they have failed to attract the people at large, as they had nothing but the cold, hard food of polished intellectual scepticism to offer to the hungry souls of a multitude famishing for something more satisfactory, not less satisfying, than what is offered by the popular orthodox churches.

Mr. Bruin was so singularly broad and cosmopolitan a man, that while his intellect was magnificent, his intuitive nature allowed him to hold spiritual as well as intellectual facts with a firm grasp. He could discourse learnedly, if he chose, upon the technical and historical sides of religious controversy, but in his case the intellect was the servant of the conscience. Pride of intellect never led him astray for a single moment. No man is faultless, and Mr. Bruin had his faults, no doubt, like other people. He was not an immaculate saint, by any means, but he was in the highest sense of the words a spiritual man. He gave to art its due place as an accessory to worship, but never as a substitute for spiritual fervour. He allowed graven images, but he could not tolerate the least semblance of idolatry. He was not the least bit superstitious, and yet he could feel and see and be guided by something and some ones, whom the senses of the body could not apprehend. His condition while preaching was a "superior condition": he was superior to the thraldom of the senses, and the petty ideas of men. He did not speculate upon spiritual matters: he gave his people positive, definite news from the invisible world, and as that marvellous seer of Sweden, Emanuel Swedenborg, was wont to see into the spirit-world and converse with its inhabitants, while his outer senses were fully alive, so he (Mr. Bruin) was able to see everything that went on around him in the chapel. He was conscious of the working of his own mind during the delivery of his discourses, and at the same time he felt ideas pass through his mind, which could not by any law of sequence have grown out of previous meditation. He literally saw spiritual truths, as the clairvoyant says he sees a form in the air or in a crystal, and these spiritual entities in the realm of mind, he described and analyzed for the benefit of his congregation, to whom his preaching was a new divine revelation. Quite unlike the superficial iconoclast, he never treated the Bible carelessly or irreverently. He never indulged in jokes in the pulpit, never

held a passage of Scripture, or a preacher or writer who differed from him, up to ridicule. He calmly surveyed the ground, and analyzed carefully the materials he found, no matter where he travelled. He was not foolish enough to call brass gold and alloy precious metal, or a parasite a wholesome tree, because he found alloy mixed with biblical gold and parasites clinging to ancient Hebrew trees. His Scripture readings were most keenly critical. He dealt with every text analytically, and gave his hearers the results of the latest scholarship upon it, but it was his oft-reiterated claim, that it was the work of the pulpit to teach religion, and that religion could not exist without morality, nor morality without religion. He believed that God dwelt within his creation, and that through man the divine life shone forth more brightly than through any other form on earth. Thus he never dealt harshly with orthodox beliefs concerning God's manifestation of himself to the world in the person of his Son, but the coarse, fleshly interpretations put by the Church on the blood of Christ he utterly repudiated. To him blood was a type, a correspondence. Blood meant life, and the life of the soul was divine truth, and just as the blood must circulate throughout the entire physical system or the body cannot live, so the truth and the love of truth must pervade our entire moral being, or we are spiritually dead or insensible.

The sermon which led to Mr. Bruin's dismissal from Parade Street, was one of the finest he ever preached. The printed pamphlet had a sale of 200,000 copies. As we cannot in this place report sermons verbatim, or copy them bodily into our tale, we must content ourselves with giving our readers just half-a-dozen lines of an abstract, to let them see for what opinions' sake Mr. Bruin was expelled from the Congregational body.

Taking for his text: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive ;" he commenced his discourse with these words :—

" We are here brought face to face with a stupendous revelation of the Eternal Love. We are introduced to a great central law of being : as many as die shall be made alive. Immortality is questioned in these days, both within and without the churches. Within our own denomination, many men retain their pulpits and preach conditional immortality, which can surely be no more orthodox a doctrine than that of

unlimited restitution. Paul had no doubts whatever on the subject. He was a *bond fide* Universalist. He makes a grand sweeping statement, and embodies his theology once for all in a single sentence : "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

"I shall treat my subject to-night in two ways. I shall deal with Adam as a person, and Adam as a type of the flesh. I shall deal with Christ as a person, and also with Christ as a type of the spirit. I shall not promise to be orthodox in anything I say. I have not premeditated my utterance : I shall speak as I am moved by a power stronger than I, which I am sure intends to open up this subject very wonderfully to us this evening.

"I must ask you, for a moment, to turn with me to the first two chapters of Genesis, and carefully re-read the two distinct accounts of the appearance of man on earth, which are there given. Colenso, and other eminent modern critics, attribute the Pentateuch to more than one author, and thus they endeavour to account for the two dissimilar narratives which stand side by side, challenging our closest investigation. Chapter one tells us, God made man (*i.e.*, mankind) in his own image, after his likeness, male and female ; and to these men and women, created simultaneously, he gave permission to eat of the fruit of every tree. Chapter two introduces us to a Garden of Eden, planted eastward in Eden, where a man was created alone, and a woman later from one of his ribs. To my mind this second account is an allegory, intended to set forth the conflict continually waging upon earth between the soul and the senses. Historically considered, I regard it as a traditional account of the special and distinctive origin of the House of Israel. If it is this, and it certainly is not historically an account of the first appearance of man on earth, then the words of my text must mean : every one who falls in Adam shall be restored in Christ, and in the time of the restitution of all things, there shall not remain one stray sheep of the House of Israel, who is not brought to the fold. If we regard Adam as a type of the flesh, and Christ as a type of the spirit, then we are but told in one short, pithy sentence, that as every human being dies physically, so shall every one without exception be made alive spiritually, by the power of the Eternal Spirit.

"I read a sermon only the other day, preached last Easter

Sunday by a Church of England clergyman, in which he said that all would indeed be made alive at the last great day, because Christ had risen corporeally from the dead ; but on the day of resurrection, the wicked would have their bodies returned to them, that they might suffer in them for ever in hell. Such a statement is its own refutation : it is too frightful, too blasphemous, to merit anything but instant and indignant dismissal, as it caricatures the character of God, debases the love of Christ, till it becomes hate to a large percentage of mankind, and tells us that Christ committed the atrocity of rising from the dead to insure eternal agony to a portion of his Father's children.

" My beloved brethren and friends, as I am a living and a dying man, answerable to the Eternal, who is my only sovereign judge, for the words I speak and the influence I exert; I declare myself a Universalist, in the broadest, highest, deepest sense of the expressive word. I am a Spiritualist, also, for I know that immortal life is no myth, but an eternal verity, and I can no more believe that our dear ones, who have passed from our mortal sight, are either unwilling or unable to assist us along the road of our thorny, earthly pilgrimage, than I can believe they have perished. This is the message of the Easter bells, the Easter carols, the Easter hymns and flowers, that as every one dies physically, so he rises spiritually, and the resurrection life is that life of the soul, which is superior to the allurements of sense, wherein every carnal appetite is completely subordinated to the moral sense."

Many, many other wise and salutary lessons did the preacher draw from his text, which want of space alone keeps from our readers.

For this sermon of Mr. Bruin's, he was tried and found guilty of soul-destroying heresy. Dr. Thumbscrew's nephew gave the deciding vote against him, and the little whipper-snapper, whose malign influence hounded a good and faithful preacher out of the Congregational Union, was soon unanimously called to occupy the vacant pulpit at Parade Street.

This "unanimous call" was, however, a call from forty-seven persons only, who soon emptied the pews and got the chapel fearfully into debt. You may go there any Sunday you please, and see the large, once crowded building less than one-eighth full. But the Mount St. Michaels are very

wealthy ; and the minister gets £500 a-year, and many presents besides. And Mr. Bruin is lecturing on all kinds of subjects, writing hundreds of volumes, and doing a vast amount of good wherever duty calls him, but away from Parade Street.



## CHAPTER XIX.

## ALMOST INCREDIBLE.

MR. BRUIN'S trial came off soon after the sermon, from which we gave a brief extract in our last chapter. He had in the interim given more attention than previously to the subject of Spiritualism. Lady Armadale was delighted with him, and as she was always enthusiastic, it is not to be wondered at that she gave him *carte-blanche* to all her *séances*, and did everything in her power to assist him in his investigations.

Mr. Bruin was by no means a gullible or credulous man, likely to mistake a sheet for a spirit, or a newspaper dexterously displayed for a little child from spirit-life, as some people are constantly doing, if we may believe the bosh published in those journals which tell us all mediums are knaves, and all who believe in the genuineness of the phenomena occurring in their presence, must be either fools or impostors.

Mr. Bruin at first was rather too sceptical and cautious for the impulsive Lady Armadale, who was one of the warm-hearted, zealous kind; but she bore with him very kindly and patiently, as she knew he could not be one of those brutes in human form, who enter *séance* rooms like snakes in the grass, pretending to be earnest Spiritualists and friends of mediums, while their sole object is to vilify every one who does not believe that everybody is an impostor, who does not play into their hands, and help them to run some infernal machinery for the utter destruction of Spiritualism on earth. Mr. Bruin was a gentleman, a nobleman, in mind and manners. His word was his bond, and if he agreed to conditions, he faithfully observed them, no matter how strongly he might have desired to break them, had not his word been pledged; but his word once pledged was never broken, no, not under the severest provocation, when to have broken it would have been to accomplish the most darling project of his life.

Lady Armadale was herself a physical and writing medium. She sat at a little magnetized table, specially consecrated to the invisibles, and only used for sitting. She used planchette,

and many were the singular messages written through this curious little toy, when her ladyship's hands were placed upon it. Mr. Bruin often had evening engagements which kept him busy till ten o'clock, or thereabouts, not often later; and as Lady Armadale always had coffee and cakes at that hour, and a sitting afterwards, when she was at home, she invited the minister frequently to spend two hours with her, from ten till twelve; it was often one or two o'clock in the morning, before her guests departed, and she betook herself to the privacy of her own chamber.

Many were the remonstrances offered by friends against the keeping of such late hours, but to all these well-meant suggestions for an alteration in her mode of life her ladyship remained impervious. She declared the hours she kept suited her health, her friends, her family: everything and everybody about her were benefitted rather than injured by them; and what weighed far more with her than any other consideration, was the fact of her spirit-friends being able to manifest far more triumphantly and conclusively at that hour than during the busy hours of day, when the air was too highly charged with the excited emanations of the bustling throng, and with the smoke from innumerable chimneys, which cannot be put down or made to consume their own smoke effectually, no, not even within the charmed precincts of aristocratic, almost royal, Belgravia. And before we leave this dissertation on Lady Armadale's late hours and midnight *séances*, we must be excused for interpolating here a spirit-communication on this subject, given through our heroine about the time of which we are now writing.

Bertha was sitting with Lady Armadale and other friends in Grosvenor Square, at midnight on one occasion, when a lady present who was absolutely puritanical in her advocacy of the old proverb: "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise," said, in a most fawning and unctuous manner, to the influence controlling Bertha:—

"Do you not think, dear spirit, that in this poor earthly sphere, we ought to go to bed with the little birdies at sun-down, and not sit up all night as we are doing here?"

Ans.—"If man were to live quite in accord with nature, he would go to bed at 8 p.m. and rise at 4 a.m.; because eight hours of rest is necessary to most constitutions out of every twenty-four. But society must be governed largely by the

influence of climate. Did you live in the tropics, where the sun always rises at 6 a.m. and sets at 6 p.m., you could better conform to very early hours of rising and retiring, than you can in England; but there you would find yourselves very much disinclined to spend the whole of the night in bed, and the whole day out of it. Certain animals convert night into day and day into night, as some creatures besides man, who live in warm latitudes, require a mid-day siesta, and are wakeful in the starlight. It is often argued that farmers are as a rule very healthy, and they are accustomed to rise early and retire early; but every one has not the temperament qualifying him for agricultural pursuits. Some temperaments require as much sleep before midnight as they can possibly get. Those who are very physical and warm-blooded, and benefit by a great deal of outdoor exercise, are alone adapted to work in the fields. These ought to rise at four or five, and go to bed at eight or nine, while persons who are less physical and more nervous (etymologically nervous, not morbidly nervous, we mean), ought to rise later and retire later, certainly in such a climate as this, where the mornings are often very chill and damp. During sleep, the temperature of the body is lowered, at least from one to two degrees. After the exercise and food you have taken during the day, the body usually becomes warmer towards night, your rooms are warmer, and you are in every way better fortified against the cold. Persons must study to adapt their hours to their work, and their work to their temperament and the bent of their genius; one rule will not suffice for all. As to spiritual manifestations being more powerful in the night than in the day, we remark simply that a restful state of mind, body, and atmosphere is most conducive to manifestations. Here in London, eleven or twelve at night is a good time to sit; in the country a much earlier hour would do as well, if not better. In summer weather, if you went to bed very early and awoke at sunrise, the early morning hours would be very appropriate for sittings. Let every one adjust such matters as these for himself or herself, by dint of patient investigation and experiment. Harmony and tranquility, unanimity of feeling, mutual confidence and good will, with an earnest enquiring mind, searching for truth alone and longing to derive benefits yourselves, so that with them you may bless others. These mental and spiritual prerequisites are the only

*absolutely necessary ones.* All other conditions are required as assistants to these, but nothing can ever be an effectual substitute for them."

One beautiful night in the early part of May, Lady Armadale had arranged for a very select and harmonious circle to meet in her library or *séance* room, at 10 p.m., to meet Mr. Horatio Vincent, the world-renowned materializing medium, from New York.

Mr. Vincent was a great favourite with American Spiritualists, and had won golden laurels in England since he commenced his career in this country, a few months previously.

Lady Armadale always had private sittings with mediums before she invited any friends to meet them, not to try and catch them tricking,—for she was far too noble, honest, and pure-minded a woman to deceive others herself, and therefore she did not usually suspect people of being humbugs. "It takes a thief to catch a thief, is a good and true old saying, and it no doubt takes a humbug to catch a humbug; at all events people who are humbugs themselves are very ready to suspect others of imposture. Why should not they? poor dear creatures! *They* would cheat you soon enough if they got the chance, and can you expect them to believe that total strangers are better than their own tricky self-conceited selves? If Spiritualists would only see in the conduct of "medium exposers," the knavery of the exposers oftener than that of the medium, they would soon refuse to pat on the back the secret foes of Spiritualism, who profess to be its friends.

Though Lady Armadale was of a thoroughly truthful and therefore unsuspecting turn of mind, she was not one of those rash champions of every medium who may come along, who unwisely introduce to public notice persons whose gifts are yet so incipient that they are not at all ready to sit with strangers, or give satisfaction to enquirers who cannot reasonably be expected to be content with less than indisputable proof of spirit presence and power. Having sat alone two or three times with Mr. Vincent: once at his apartments and also at her own house; and having on all occasions witnessed startling phenomena, she had no hesitancy in asking him to meet Mr. Bruin and other friends, in her drawing-room on the evening in question.

The circle was composed of twelve persons, including Lady Armadale, exclusive of Mr. Vincent. Bertha and

her brother were two, Lady Bun and Mr. Horace Carmichael, Lady Bun's nephew and an astute barrister, were included in the list of invited guests.

No one was asked to contribute in any way to the medium's fee. This her ladyship doubled, and paid out of her own pocket ungrudgingly. She had a large income, and she was always ready to devote at least a tithe of it to the support of the Cause which lay nearest her heart.

Punctually at 10 p.m., Mr. Vincent took his seat behind the curtain, which, drawn across a corner of the room, formed an extempore cabinet. Mr. Bruin sat next the cabinet on one side and Mr. Carmichael on the other, and as these gentlemen were both of them enquirers simply, and persons who stood exceptionally high in polite and cultured society, no one with any reason at all would be likely to suspect them as parties to collusion or any form of deception.

Bertha sang, "Angels ever bright and fair," while the spirits were entrancing the medium and preparing for the wonderful display of spirit-power which was so soon to electrify all assembled.

A slight rustling noise was heard, as though a lady attired in silk were parting the curtains; and soon after a beautifully-attired female form, in robes of rich moire antique silk, glided gracefully forward with gentle, undulatory movements, advanced to Mr. Carmichael, and said to him in soft, musical tones :—

"Horace, you have not forgotten the Duchess, I hope."

Now, "the Duchess" was the pet name given to a haughty belle, who had caught a severe cold at a masked ball two years previously, and six months from the time of her seizure was in the embrace of death, caused by galloping consumption.

Mr. Carmichael had never been really in love with her, neither did she ever appear to regard him in the light of a possible suitor for her heart and hand, but they had been excellent and confidential friends, chums, quite like brother and sister, people used to say.

*La Duchesse*, as she was familiarly called by her associates, was only twenty-three at the time of her passing away, but she affected the stately grace of a leader of fashion, rather than the more youthful style generally adopted by young ladies of her years. Her appearance this evening in heavy dark blue moire antique, was a most remarkable test of her presence to

Mr. Carmichael, as Mr. Vincent was an entire stranger to England as well as to him, and "the Duchess," having passed away eighteen months previous, and being rarely mentioned in society so long after her decease, it was extremely improbable that he should ever have heard of her, much less that he should have known of the friendship existing between this young lady and the barrister. And then the posing was perfect, absolutely true to life. The old affected grace and studied dignity, the elaborate coiling of the gilded locks, the haughty tones of command in her voice, all were an exact facsimile of "the Duchess" as she appeared at her last ball on earth, and even during her last illness she never wholly lost her imperial air. She shocked the clergyman who visited her in her dying moments, by telling him she preferred earth to heaven, and only hoped spirits could linger about the earth, as she meant to go to no end of parties and indulge in no end of gaieties, when she got free from the body. Her last words were :—

"Now be sure to go to some materializing *séance*, as soon as you get the chance, and see if I don't come and show myself, if it's possible. I shall be close around you here, and with you always; and I'll give you a test of my presence, if I possibly can."

Horace had been with her in her last moments, and as his aunt, Lady Bun, was a frequenter of *séances*, he had always surreptitiously indulged in the unspoken hope, that he might some day see the materialized form of "*La Duchesse*" in all her old bravery and coquetry. He had felt her loss more, far more, than he had anticipated, as she was in many senses a woman after his own heart: one of those brilliant butterflies of fashion, with a good spicing of wit, humour and intellect, which men of the world, fond of display and yet no lovers of inanity, invariably admire. Coming up to him, as she did, with the old winsome playfulness and stately reserve which were so singularly combined in her demeanour when on earth, the barrister was impressed with the stupendous fact of human immortality, as he had never been before.

He was a young, handsome fellow of twenty-seven: the life of his club and the brain of his profession. Constant in his attendance at a fashionable West End church, where he went to hear the music and admire the ladies, he had very seldom troubled himself with religious speculations. He accepted the

existence of the Deity as a matter of course. Had you asked him if he believed in a hereafter, he would very likely have yawned and said : " Yes, I suppose so," and then changed the subject. But to behold standing before him, just as of yore, the form of this unspiritual and yet by no means vicious woman, who seemed so utterly unchanged in mind and manners by the change called death, opened up altogether new vistas to his mental vision, enlarged his spiritual horizon so immensely that he was introduced into new worlds and fields of thought altogether, alien to those in which he had for several years been both working and dreaming.

The lady and her costume baffled his judgment, defied his reason, and in every particular upset all his theories of the limits of the possible. But facts are stubborn things, and Mr. Carmichael was not a mule : he might be firm but he was not obstinate ; and having no particular attachment to any set of theological or materialistic opinions, nothing had to be rudely wrested from him ere he could allow himself to candidly consider the pros and cons of Spiritualism. He was deeply impressed, to say the least. Had the form remained with him longer, it might have thoroughly satisfied him of the truth of spirit-communion, there and then, but the power weakening, and other spirits desiring to put in an appearance, "the Duchess," though very reluctantly, soon made her *adieu*, and vanished mysteriously, as she had appeared, behind the curtain.

One very noteworthy feature of this appearance was, that instead of shrinking from the touch, as forms developed in this way so often do, as though they could not endure contact with our persons or bear the gaze of our eyes, this figure went boldly up to Mr. Carmichael, and caressed his face, stroked his hair and whiskers, and acted quite unrestrainedly with him. Now, had the medium been an impostor and the spirit a dressed-up mask, it is not very likely that Mr. Vincent would have sent his lay figure to be examined by a critical barrister, who, above all others, would be likely to detect the imposture. This circumstance carried much weight with it to the minds of all present.

No sooner had this astounding phenomenon taken place, than another of even greater majesty transpired. The sitters were quietly sitting in a horse-shoe circle in front of the cabinet, when the attention of one of the ladies was drawn to a

small, white object on the floor. At first sight it looked as though it were a handkerchief of some soft, filmy, white material ; but, as all eyes were concentrated upon it, it suddenly assumed a life-like appearance. It began to move and to increase in size, till slowly rising into a thin transparent column of vapour, it took upon itself the proportions of a finely-formed human figure. Gradually becoming more solid, it at length showed its features plainly, but at no time was it of the dense and often gross texture of the human body. It was just what we might imagine a beautiful denizen of a purer world to be, a creature with form and parts perfectly, symmetrically human, and yet of finer mould than our earthly selves.

Swedenborg's statements concerning the spiritual body, as being composed of substance, but substance finer and more excellent than that of the physical frame, came forcibly to the mind of Mr. Bruin, who was strongly tinctured with New Church theology. This beautiful being was scarcely solid enough to be called a fully-materialized figure. The manifestation, speaking technically, was an etherealization, and this mode of spirit-manifestation is often more beautiful and convincing than materialization ; as it leaves less room for the sceptic to edge in his theory of possible fraud on the part of the medium.

This beautiful figure, graceful as the finest specimens of Greek or Italian art, remained fully visible for at least ten minutes. Sometimes it would appear stronger and more solid than at others, and once, just before it vanished, it spoke. Some one enquired, as people will at circles,

"Is it anyone I know?"

And the form, seeming anxious to reveal his identity as much as possible, said :—

"I am a spirit-messenger from another planet. I come to earth to learn, and to teach, also. I am from Venus, but have outgrown the need of longer experience in its surrounding spheres, so I come to earth to learn what this planet can teach me, and to impart the knowledge I have gained elsewhere. An angel gives me power to show myself. I am that angel's very humble and very willing servant and child."

As though this speech had quite used up what power remained, no further wonders were shown that evening, but all who had been privileged to visit at so marvellous a *seance*,

were too deeply impressed to even converse much upon what had taken place under their very eyes.

Wonderful as anything related in fairy tale, marvellous as any of the transcendent creations of the fertile and doubtless inspired brains of Hans Andersen, Bulwer Lytton, or Jules Verne, no one thought of questioning the reality of what had taken place that night. No corroborative testimony concerning similar wonders taking place elsewhere, could have added one iota to the impression upon the sitters there and then. A modern miracle had been performed under their very eyes, and moreover a miracle of so astounding a character, that it left no tinge of dissatisfaction in the minds of those who witnessed it. The medium was in darkness, screened from all observation, but the sitters were in light; and as the light was strong enough all the time to allow of the leading article in a newspaper being read without difficulty, or the aid of spectacles, by any one with good average eyesight, the manifestations cannot be said to have taken place in the dark, or in so dim a light that the use of vision was denied to the beholders.

Mr. Horace Vincent continued to hold sittings and to give *séances* in London, at Lady Armadale's and elsewhere, and so wonderful and convincing were the tests given through him, that he was frequently offered five guineas for an hour's sitting, and had to refuse even close connections of Royalty, so eagerly was he sought after.

"*Almost incredible*, but yet believable, yea, and also demonstrable," were the words of Mr. Bruin, as at 1.30 a.m. he left Lady Armadale's hospitable mansion, to wend his way homeward in deep and joyful meditation, on that lovely spring night; and ere our story closes, we shall meet Mr. Bruin again, and see how true he is to the heavenly vision, he dares not and wills not to despise.



## CHAPTER XX.

## THE GATHERING OF A STORM.

OUR readers will not have forgotten the strange and sudden fits of depression, which occasionally overtook Bertha, even in the midst of Parisian gaieties and London triumphs; neither will they forget how intensely she always dwelt upon the idea of her brother's removal from her, whenever one of these fits of gloom oppressed her. That her spirit-mother foresaw her approaching trial was evident, and that she could not ward it off is also plain, for she would often, when her daughter felt depressed, come to her and help her to think calmly and soberly of life, even though its brightest joys should not always be her portion.

Bertha's mother and guide, however, was not one of those short-sighted mortals or immortals, who can only see the iron hand of relentless fate in the trials of life. In everything she strove to trace out divine Providence and angelic guidance, and as we poor mortals here on earth have to suffer many of us frequently and bitterly, sufferings coming upon us from unlooked-for quarters and in ways utterly beyond our control to alter, we surely are entitled to all the consolation we can draw from a contemplation of the uses of suffering, and the divine mercy displayed or veiled in the ministry of pain.

Oh! shallow Iconoclast, short-sighted Materialist, blind guide of the blind: into what a foul and hopeless ditch do you fall, and drag your poor deluded satellites, when even should there be no life beyond the grave, you needlessly embitter the short span of mortal existence, by failing to trace life's battle to a divine issue, and the sorrows of man's earthly way to a beneficent overruling Providence, who sustains the tender and intimate relation of father and mother both, to every human soul. Human weaknesses and errors are of course at best pitiable and saddening, and to them as secondary causes we must attribute much of the misery which overtakes us along our earthly way. But, then, if

weakness and error, mistake and suffering are permitted, let us see the goodness which endows every man and woman with a limited share of that awful and yet priceless gift of free-will, which by rendering us subject to sin and its consequent sorrow, renders us subject also to righteousness and its necessary reward.

Bertha's brother was no saint, no immaculate hero, who passed unscathed through every temptation of life. He was very human, very fallible, very peccable, very headstrong, very self-indulgent and self-loving, and yet he had many noble traits of character, and was anything but a hypocrite or a skulking coward. His animosities were openly expressed : he scorned calumny, slander, detraction, and all the vilenesses tolerated in polite society, among people who bite the backs of the very persons whose cheeks they have kissed five minutes before.

Neither Bertha nor Victor could ever bring themselves to kiss the folks whom they desired to ruin. If they owed any one a grudge, they acted with open hostility ; and let the person beware who had incurred Victor's fierce displeasure, or he might soon rue the day when he had aroused the ire of the impetuous young Italian.

Soon after the events recorded in our last chapter, Victor was summoned to attend the bedside of an elderly gentleman, who had been under the ineffectual treatment of the best London physicians, for the past several years.

The poor old man was very wealthy, but a hopeless cripple. He grew rapidly worse, under the care of Sir Thomas Sugarcane, Physician in Ordinary to the Queen. He was suffering from a complication of painful and chronic maladies, which utterly baffled the skill of this most eminent physician. The poor old gentleman had such a strong desire to live, and such an appalling fear of death, that when he saw that the great man entertained no hopes of his recovery, he wept like a frightened child, and passed into a feverish sleep disturbed by horrid dreams ; while his sole heiress—a haughty, heartless niece—looked on unmoved, perhaps hailing the day when the property of the uncle, who had been to her as a devoted father, should pass into her own hands entirely ; though she now virtually controlled the estates, and was mistress of the splendid house in town and yet more magnificent country seat in Wiltshire, over which establishments she reigned as a

despotic queen, feared but not beloved by her numerous dependents and domestics.

The tenantry in Wiltshire hated her. Her tool and vassel was a pettifogging attorney, who collected her rents, and would have sold his soul for gold,—of which, however, he got precious little from the heiress-presumptive to these magnificent estates. But as some passion, which is a substitute for love, exists even in the breasts of vipers we may suppose, so this young country lawyer, wretch though he was, really felt some affection for the richly-dowered young lady, whom he hoped to induce eventually to become his bride.

He was a young man of excellent family. His father was Lord Mount-Sharon, his mother, the Duchess of Samson's-Gates. An apostate Jew, false to the religion of his fathers, a base betrayer of the sacred trust committed to the sons of Israel, this rascal passed for a devout Christian, and was mistaken by many for one of those impulsive Israelites, whom societies for introducing Christolatry among the Jews, succeed in drawing into the Christian fold, about one in a year, at a cost of not less than £10,000 to the gullible, parson-led innocents, who believe that the Jews are rapidly giving up their grand historical religion, to ally themselves with moral and intellectual pygmies, who having emasculated the Gospel of Jesus, endeavour to foist their distorted Christianity upon the sons of Abraham.

This young "Christian convert" cared no more for churches, priests and bibles than he cared for the dirt under his feet. The motto of his life was: Money at any price. If he could have got into the good graces of Sir Moses Mountain-fire, or Baron Rothschild, or any other wealthy Israeliite, the chances would have been few indeed of his ever becoming a "convert to Christianity."

There are still in the camp of Israel, those who worship Aaron's golden calf, and these are none other than those who, sighing for material wealth alone, will Esau-like sell their birthright for a mess of pottage.

A ne'er-do-well from his youth, his father had disinherited him. Having some natural aptitude for the legal profession, he studied in Chancery Lane, with Mr. Joseph Killingworth, and when at twenty-three years of age he was a fully-fledged lawyer, some young men who lived in Shroveston, Wiltshire, and who had made his acquaintance when he was articled clerk

to Mr. Killingcats, gave him a cordial invitation to their house in Shroveston, close to the Hindmarsh estates, which were at that time occupied by the proprietor and his daughter, as she was always called in the neighbourhood.

Sir James Montgamboire was a good old man, and his fear of death arose more from hypochondria than his sins. He had a very bad digestion, an affected heart, a wretchedly deranged liver, a torturing spine, a very gouty left leg, and, oh! dear, a hundred other miseries to encounter, the bare recital of which is enough to make a healthy person's flesh creep.

Miss Lydia Montgamboire was a brunette of twenty-two; a splendidly-formed, Juno-like creature. Voluptuous, passionate, seductive, her beauty was of the type admired by a certain questionable set of men, but regarded as positively repulsive by pure-minded women of artistic tastes and refined sensibilities.

This attractive creature—for very attractive she doubtless was to many a gay young squire—had fallen desperately in love with Signor Vulpi. She had heard and seen him in “Semiramide”; she had seen him as *Edgardo* in “Lucia,” and when she had been too utterly overcome by his attractions to restrain her feelings any longer, he had appeared fully attired in diabolical costume, as *Mephistopheles* in “Faust.”

As opera singers, and, indeed, all persons who perform publicly, are in a sense public property, the formal etiquette necessary to be observed in approaching a private individual, may be very considerably set aside in their case. Miss Montgamboire was, therefore, not guilty of any outrageous breach of the proprieties, when she sent him a gorgeous bouquet, enclosing a *billet-doux* to the effect that his acting and his singing had so charmed her, that he was earnestly requested to call upon her uncle and herself, and dine with them at 5.30 the following day. She assigned two reasons for fixing so early an hour: one was her uncle's very poor health, and the other, her wish to give Signor Vulpi an opportunity of thoroughly enjoying a good dinner, without hurry before they went to the theatre.

She knew that Bertha was Signor Vulpi's sister, and that they were devotedly attached and quite inseparable, but desiring a *tête-à-tête* with the brother, it was farthest from her thoughts to invite the sister, also.

Victor being unfavourably impressed with the lady who called in her carriage to leave the bouquet, though her

man-servant left it at the door while she remained in her chariot, sent the following curt answer, which he intended as a snub and a reproof to the brazen young lady:—

“MADAM,—To-morrow is inconvenient to my sister: she cannot dine with you on that day, therefore, we must with thanks decline the offer of your hospitality.—Respectfully,  
“VICTOR VULPI.”

When Miss Montgamboire received that missive, she flew in a rage, stamped upon the offending paper, and vowed that if ever intrigue of hers could make the handsome singer, who was thus insensible to her charms, smart for his neglect of her, he should do so, and that severely. Nevertheless, she went to the opera, and heard him in “*Maritana*” that very evening. If possible, she admired him more than ever. Men were usually to her an easy conquest, and there was really a spice of novelty in the conduct of this most ungallant cavalier.

That evening a splendid bouquet was thrown at Bertha, of whom she found she must make something, if she were to win the brother’s heart; and though the attorney in Wiltshire loved her, she laughed at his affections; and though she loved Victor, he ridiculed her love. Such is the irony of fate.

“Love begets love,” may be a true saying, but then true love is something as different in nature and worth from debasing, earthly passion, as a genuine diamond of the clearest water is different from the paltry imitations which are “warranted equal in appearance and power of endurance” to the genuine stone.

Are they equal? You had better purchase a shilling diamond ring, if you want to know. The setting is unmistakably brass, and the diamond is not even a crystal, and after a few times wearing, this spurious imitation loses all its brilliancy, all its pretence to diamond likeness fades, and as a worthless scrap of glass, or valueless and unlovely chemical compound, it is thrust aside as an unwelcome memento of the good shilling you threw after the bad finger-ring.

Bertha, on the day following, received a delicately-scented missive adorned with flowers:—

“MY LOVELY, UNKNOWN FRIEND,—May I not implore you to make beautiful the wilderness of my poor dear uncle’s large

town house to-morrow, if not to-day; or if not to-morrow, any day this week or next, that you are disengaged? You ought to be called La Diva, at the least. You are beyond every other actress, every other singer in the world. I have fallen a victim to your charms. Have pity on me, and light up my desolate dwelling with your ineffable smiles; make vocal the silent wilderness of my gilded cage with your inimitable song. Permit me to subscribe myself, your devoted admirer,

LYDIA MONTGAMBOIRE."

Our readers may imagine how heartily Bertha and Victor both laughed over this effusive and utterly insincere missive. What kind of answer (if any) it would have received had not Sir James been taken suddenly worse that day, we cannot undertake to say; but when Lady Bun, calling on Sir James, was present when he was struck with paralysis, and immediately sent her own carriage, post haste, for Victor, knowing him to be the most marvellously-successful magnetizer London had ever seen, the young man being at home and disengaged, could do nothing other than respond instantly to the imperative summons. He knew Lady Bun and knew her carriage, and recognised her coachman, but had it been a call from Lydia, the chances are he would have thought the uncle's stroke a mere ruse, and declined to attend upon him.

Getting into Lady Bun's carriage without a moment's unnecessary delay, he was driven quickly as horse's hoofs could take him, through the crowded London streets, to 307, Lower Curzon Street.

He was at once ushered into what Lady Bun feared and Lydia hoped was a chamber of death.

The heartless girl, after all her uncle had done for her, only wished him dead. She had been left in childhood a penniless orphan, and he had succoured, sheltered, pampered her, indulged her every whim, left her his sole successor to the estates, which were not subject to entail and were under his supreme control, and yet she grudged him a living on his own grounds. However, in presence of Lady Bun and Victor she was as demure as a cat watching a mouse. Mock tears were in her eyes, and when she put up her embroidered, lace-bordered handkerchief to wipe the briny drops away, she indulged in a repressed laugh at the silliness of Lady Bun, whom she called a fool because she believed Lydia's grief to be real and not

assumed, as it certainly was, not only on this but on all other occasions when she had displayed emotion at her uncle's bedside.

"So you are a physician as well as a singer," said the fair Lydia to Victor, as he approached her uncle's bedside. "Poor dear uncle! I'm afraid this last stroke will carry him off. He has had two seizures before, and the third generally kills."

"Hush, hush, my dear, I implore you," whispered Lady Bun in Lydia's ear, considerably disconcerted by such remarks within ear-shot of the patient. "You surely ought to know better than to talk about the possible consequences of paralysis, here in your uncle's room.

"Oh! he's deaf as an adder, poor dear uncle; and besides, he's been insensible, as you know, ever since he was taken," answered Lydia, quite audibly.

Many people are called deaf as adders, who hear a great deal more than we give them credit for hearing. Sir James Montgamboire was far too weak to talk, too weak indeed to give any external signs of consciousness, but he heard every word his niece uttered, clearly and distinctly. Every syllable she uttered entered into his very soul, as though it had been burned in as with a hot iron. Poor old man! how deeply he felt her ingratitude or read her heart, no one can say. He may have been mercifully blinded by that veil which affection draws over a beloved object, no matter how base the character of the beloved one may be; but surely and deeply did the words, so constantly reiterated in his presence by the careless niece who believed him to be "deaf as an adder," sink in his mind, that when she found herself partially disinherited at her uncle's death, while her rage knew no bounds and her disappointment was keener than the thrust of a dagger, she never attributed the change in her uncle's will to anything but Victor's scheming. Him, she first sought to woo and win, but failing to make the least impression on what she was pleased to call "his adamantine heart," she eagerly and persistently sought his destruction, and in so doing, like others who seek the downfall of their neighbours, she accomplished her own.

Lady Bun had heard much of magnetization and mermerism. She was quite familiar with the views of Professor Gregorius, of Aberdeen, on "Animal Magnetism," and was quite ready to stand up and defend psychology, whenever the

science was assailed; but she was not prepared to see the apparently-dead restored to life under her very eyes.

Sir James was lying in a profound stupour, not really unconscious but far too weak to show even the slightest sign of vitality to an ordinary watcher by his bed. Restoratives were useless. Every one thought the end had come, and kind-hearted Lady Bun wept copiously over her old friend, a playmate of her childish days, who, though never a suitor for her hand, had always been one of her staunchest friends through life, and she had been to him perhaps even more than he had been to her.

We may believe as firmly as we will in immortality, we may rejoice exceedingly in the blessedness of spiritual communion with our dear ones in the other life, but Spiritualists in common with the rest of mankind have their natural feelings, which will not altogether be subdued, and the cry of our hearts, when our dear ones drop asleep in the arms of the Angel of Transition, is a cry because they are no longer on our plane of life, no longer subject to the limitations which govern us, and therefore not so companionable to the outer nature of man as before they left the body. And then, Sir James dreaded death. He hated to leave this pleasant, sunshiny world, which he knew, even for a better land to which he was a stranger; and his kind-hearted friend could not bear to think of her dear old friend, whom she had known and loved from childhood, going out of this terrestrial state of existence, until brighter thoughts had dispelled these dark and sad forebodings.

Victor, during these cogitations of Lady Bun's, had not been idle. He had summoned a servant, who procured for him a large basin of very hot water, into which he placed the patient's cold, clammy hands. Then he directed two of the men-servants to lift their master out of bed, and place him in a comfortable reclining chair before the fire, close to which stood a large foot-bath half-full of hot water, in which was a little mustard. Into this he gradually lowered the patient's feet, then putting the patient's hands in a basin of the same fluid, which stood on a little table close to the chair, he placed one of his hands on the nape of Sir James's neck, while he drew the other slowly and firmly seven times down the spinal column. Then still keeping his right hand on the nape of the sufferer's neck, he drew his left seven times down

the chest, then seven times down each arm ; then releasing the neck from pressure, he drew his hands seven times down both legs simultaneously. Then placing his finger-tips lightly on the eyes, and breathing heavily three times in the patient's face, he said to the servants,

"Take away the baths from the hands and feet."

They did so instantly ; then addressing Sir James he said,

"Now, my dear Sir, get up out of this chair, and walk back to bed."

Without a minute's hesitation the sufferer rose and walked, and then looking round the room he said, absent-mindedly.

"Where am I ? Where have I been ? I've seen a bright form bending over me, with golden light issuing from the points of his fingers. I have been up among the clouds, talking with such beautiful-looking people, that everything here looks dark, and, oh ! some one said to me, 'This is what you will see, this is where you will dwell, when you die.' And then I prayed to God to forgive me for repining so much at the thought of death, and then everything seemed to fade away, and I felt a hand on my face, and a warm current of air fanned my cheek, and somebody told me to get up and walk into bed."

This simple, artless confession of the old man was made without any sign that he thought he was relating anything very unusual. He seemed to have forgotten his long illness, his years of feebleness ; he had taken a new lease of life, and was a young man in his feelings once again.

It is a singular fact, that when persons awake from the magnetic sleep, into which they have been thrown by the joint influence of spirits and magnetizers, that they seem to wake to outer consciousness out of some spiritual state of rapture, into which they have been introduced by the angelic powers who control the operator, who in his turn controls the subject. How beautiful it is to learn from the immortals, who discourse to mortals on these themes, that there is something at work when lasting cures are performed, infinitely higher than odic force or animal magnetism. Odyle may be employed as a connecting link between the spirit-world and gross forms of matter on the earth, but odyle is not self-intelligent. Animal magnetism may relieve pain, it is true, but only by the direct action (and by direct we mean direct in its fullest

sense) of spirit-power can a cure such as the one just related, under any conceivable circumstances be performed.

Lady Bun was almost beside herself with joy.

Lydia was too astonished to hide her bewilderment. She effusively thanked Victor for his marvellous agency in restoring her uncle to health, but secretly she vowed vengeance upon the young man, who with such supreme magical endowments, would surely gain a powerful hold over her uncle, whom he had so miraculously delivered from the jaws of death.

Sir James soon came to fully realize his position, and as he discovered that he needed some gentleman always with him to manage his estates and act as his resident physician and private secretary, finding it useless to endeavour to persuade Victor to give up the stage and devote himself entirely to the health and comfort of an old man, they came to the following terms: Victor was to live with Sir James in London, during the season, and in Wiltshire, from when the season ended till Christmas time had passed, and London was again crying out for the Opera. He was to receive a salary of £1,000 per annum, besides everything to eat, drink and wear he chose to order from the trades-people employed by Sir James; and Bertha was to live with them, and be a nice, young companion to his niece, Sir James, in the goodness of his heart, suggested.

What fatal steps we poor, weak mortals, blinded by love of ease and buoyed up by ambition, often take, and yet out of what fearful depths are we raised to greatest usefulness and honour, as the pure, white lily springs from out the river's mud. We shall soon see how the plan worked, and how fierce a fight was waged between the powers of good and evil in the Montgamboire household.



## CHAPTER XXI.

## BERTHA'S MISERY.

As it is not the purpose of this work to introduce to the notice of its readers all the intricacies of an infernal plot, concocted and carried out by such persons as Lydia Montgamboire and Mrs. Sweetgeese, we shall very hurriedly pass over the intriguing methods by which Bertha and her brother were drawn asunder.

Bertha's guides had given her to understand, that some great misfortune was about to overtake her, and when she heard of her brother's acceptance of Sir James's offer, her heart sank within her. No longer blithe and gay as a summer bird, as she was wont to be, she appeared preoccupied and sad, and when the season ended, and she accompanied her brother, Sir James and Lydia Montgamboire to Wiltshire, she felt as though she were going to a living tomb.

The Montgamboire estates were large and fruitful, and in the beautiful August weather they looked divinely fair. The grand, old house was like a castle, surrounded by a large and perfectly-kept park, where the deer roamed at will on the green sward, and the long-necked swans disported themselves gaily in the stream which ran through the grounds, and on its banks.

The house itself was sumptuously furnished, and in the best of taste, as Sir James had lived much abroad, and was a great connoisseur in works of art. The daintiest of Sèvres china, the purest of marble and parian statuettes, the most expensive of modern as well as ancient pictures adorned the spacious halls and stair-cases, as well as the numerous banquet and reception rooms with which the house abounded.

Such a room as that into which Bertha was shown, and told to call her own, she had never seen in dreamland. Such magnificent proportions, such exquisite decorations, such prodigal provision for every possible and impossible want of a young lady of scarcely nineteen summers, fairly dazzled her, accustomed as she was to splendour on the stage and in the

drawing-rooms of the nobility where she had so often sung in London. But, somehow or another, neither London nor Paris, nor any English, American, or Continental or Oriental city houses are quite so remarkable for the provision made in them for luxury and style, as are the grand ancestral halls of our royally-descended progenitors in the very heart of the country.

In a great city everything seems crowded more or less. The finest houses are crampy, comparatively speaking. Every inch of space around one seems to be in eager demand, to house the multitudes who flock thither by the law of gregariousity, but out in the country, houses occupy the room of city squares. Whole blocks of dwellings seem to be massed into one enormous mansion, which has been added to by nearly every generation since the days of William the Conqueror, till the structure is Doric, Gothic, Tudor, Plantagenet, Elizabethan, Georgian, and Victorian, all in one. Such a house was Crewdsley Manor, the ancestral home of forty generations of Montgamboires.

What prospect could be more enchanting to a poetic girl, than the view from Bertha's window ! Miles upon miles of exquisite scenery, as far as the eye could reach, the horizon only bounded by the feebleness of human vision. Sometimes the mists would gather on the hillocks and the plains, excluding the lovely panorama from the enraptured gaze of the spectator ; then a bright gleam of sunshine would disperse these vapours almost in an instant, and the view would be brighter and more extended than ever.

Oh ! how many day-dreams did our heroine indulge. How often would she sit out in the Park, with Victor by her side, and talk of the years before them of health and wealth and happiness ; until one day Bertha's grief became insupportable, and there was no outward reason for her sorrow. The stars had ne'er shone brighter than on that lovely autumn night, but as though suddenly stricken to the death, the affrighted girl cowered as if beneath the blow of some unseen assassin. With eyes distended, wild with fear, she clutched convulsively at her brother's arm, and, in accents like nothing human, entreated him on her bended knees, while tears coursed down her cheeks like rain, to fly with her from that polluted spot, and leave the lair of the fell enchantress once and for ever.

Victor was sorely puzzled to account for so frantic an out-

burst of feeling. He used every means in his power to quiet and console her. Then he scolded her, and commanded her to desist from acting so insanely, with no earthly reason for such an outburst of frenzied grief. But all in vain ; she sobbed and moaned hysterically till her strength was spent, and then she lay prone on the cold, damp grass, in almost inarticulate murmurs of agonized entreaty, imploring him who was her all on earth, to fly at once from the nameless peril which surrounded him.

Alas, alas, he heeded not her cry ! He could not see the destroying angel in the path, and though not an ass, but his own beloved sister intreated him to turn aside and be warned in time, so as to escape the impending blow, he preferred to follow his poor, blind, carnal reason, to the heaven-born intuition of his inspired and prophetic sister.

Oh ! ye philosophers of modern days, who sing the praise of reason, and decry the sacred intuitions which inflame the souls of the seers and seeresses of all climes and ages, remember ere it be too late and your doom is fixed, that that poor reason of your own, which you adore instead of the Almighty, is not the highest reason in the universe, as you so fondly and so vainly imagine it to be. It is but the feeblest spark of reason's sacred flame, which in the higher beings who can reach your souls, if not your senses, is absolute knowledge, true understanding, the result of ages of experience in spirit-life.

Bertha's paroxysms ended in a trance of profound insensibility, and for once her brother could not arouse her. She was evidently in other hands than his this time. Soon every trace of weariness and pain departed, she seemed to be gazing up into heaven, and beholding unspeakable glories in the homes where angels dwell. Her lips parted in a smile of ineffable sweetness, a light brighter than that of earth illumined her eyes, and as her brother sat watching her as she lay in sweet somnambulic repose on the velvet couch in the yellow drawing-room, whither he had conducted her, his conscience smote him.

Was she going to pass from this external life ? Were there any malign influences at work in this sumptuously-decorated cage in which the wild bird seemed to languish ? Was he not doing wrong in giving no heed to the earnest, imploring words she, or some spirit-messenger though her lips, had so recently addressed to him ?

God only knows whether or no he would have relented even at the eleventh hour and done her bidding, had not the soft rustle of silken garments reminded him that he and his sister were not the only occupants of that gorgeous and spacious room.

Softly gliding towards him with subtle snake-like movements, or with motions like those of a panther ready to spring upon her prey, he beheld the fair Lydia. She was gorgeously attired in a splendid dinner dress of dark blue silk, which became her admirably, and showed up every point in her fine figure to the best possible advantage. Evidently she was in one of her gayest and happiest moods, but her gay and happy moods were always dangerous ones for all parties concerned, as she was one of those singularly unfortunate persons, who seem never happy unless carrying out some successful plot which they have laid to entrap some unwary feet; a plot which if successful, will surely land some one in the arms of misery, though it may not in any appreciable degree, even from a worldly standpoint, advance their own interests.

Approaching Victor, she beckoned to him to come out into the passage-way with her, and then telling him in a whisper that her uncle wanted to see him instantly upon some important business, she conducted him to a large apartment in another part of the mansion.

The business with Sir James was soon completed, and then as Bertha was still sleeping heavily upon the couch in the yellow drawing-room, Lydia requested Victor to take a stroll with her in the garden, and smoke a cigarette or two.

The evening was unspeakably lovely, the very evening two lovers would have selected for a moonlight ramble. The air was neither sultry nor oppressive, but it was very still. It was by this time fully ten o'clock, the birds had ceased their twitterings, the hum of insects had died away, the stars had by this time risen, and the moon, now at its full, shone down upon that fair spot of earth, with such mild beams of silvery brightness, as we might imagine irradiating from the snowy sheen of a transfigured spirit.

The silence was so divine, that for a moment neither dared to break it. Then Lydia, having led her companion in the direction of a seat in one of the most charming parts of the grounds, and requested him to be seated, commenced unfolding to him the real project she had in mind, when she called him out into the garden.

Without endeavouring to reproduce word for word the dialogue which took place between these two, we shall give our readers a condensed sketch only of the conversation, which was continued far on into the night.

It is curious how far from the point persons are apt to commence their discourse, when they have anything of importance to say, especially when one stands a little in awe of the other. By what strange processes of circumlocution do we often arrive, and then but hazily, at our ends, when a few concise sentences would enable us to say in five minutes, more to the point than we sometimes get off in as many hours.

Lydia was as fearless, as bold, as daring a person as one is likely to meet in a day's walk through the crowded thoroughfares of the busiest mart in the world, nevertheless she was playing for such high stakes and with so awful an alternative, that even she cowered before the thoughts of what might be, perhaps to herself, the result of her present interview with the young man whom she loved and hated, defied and feared, all at the same time.

We know there are persons who deny the possibility of loving and hating the same person at one and the same moment, and it may be that in the highest sense of the word we cannot *love* the person to whom we feel even the faintest sentiment of hatred; but to those who cannot enter into abstruse metaphysical analyses of the master-passion, it certainly appears self-evident, that love and hatred for the same object can and do co-exist in many breasts.

Lydia cared so much for Victor, that she wanted to marry him when she first met him. Believing herself to be sole heiress to some of the finest and richest estates in England, she was ready to place half her fortune at his disposal, i.e., to settle upon him in the event of their marriage, half the enormous wealth which, if left to her by her uncle's will, would be hers in her own name and right, and not her husband's. Her motive, then, for seeking to capture him could not have been mercenary, but after Victor's close association with her uncle, his evident indifference but not dislike for herself, the many private consultations with lawyers when she was not admitted, though Victor was, and a host of other suspicious circumstances led her to suspect, and not without some reason, that her uncle's fortune might in part, at least, be left to Victor,

whom she was sure would never marry her were it not for her money. She had concocted a plan worthy of his Satanic Majesty himself, whereby she intended to bring Victor to terms, and settle all things to her own satisfaction.

Posing herself gracefully in front of the young man, whose suitor she was (he certainly did not seek her hand), she began by expatiating theatrically upon the beauties of the grounds, the loveliness of the night, the sweetness of human affection. Victor listened to her rhapsodies with little enthusiasm but some interest, as she was a born actress, and would have made a fortune on the stage in high tragedy, had she been dependent on talent for a livelihood; then working herself up to a pitch of frenzy, she bent over Victor and told him in the sweetest, softest accents she could summon, that her heart was bursting with love for him, that she cared naught for houses or lands or titles or fame: she only wanted him. He was all the world to her, and did he refuse her, her life would be blighted for ever. She would fly to France and enter a convent, soon to die of a broken heart.

She was young and exceedingly beautiful: few men could have withstood such an appeal from such a goddess; but Victor was not very impressible at the best of times, and in this case he knew more than Lydia had any idea he knew of the real facts of the case. Answering her very calmly and deliberately, he said,

"Pardon, Signora, it is not my desire to hurt your feelings or repulse any genuine affection which you may offer me, but as your love, your grief, your tears all are feigned, I tell you once for all, that your protestations of love for me are worse than useless. I do not love you, neither will I pretend an emotion I do not feel; so as it is impossible that there should ever be between us in the future a closer intimacy than there has been in the past, I must beg of you, not on my account but for the sake of your own self-respect, to refrain from making any more such exhibitions of yourself to me."

Once more she strove to melt his adamantine heart, to tear the stone from his bosom and replace it with a heart of flesh, to quote her similes, but in vain. Her second offer was repulsed haughtily and indignantly, and Victor positively put her from him, and moved in the direction of the verandah windows, within which his sister still lay sleeping.

Then, finding herself thus rudely driven back by the only

man for whom she entertained any feeling approaching that of genuine affection, she turned suddenly round upon him like an infuriated tigress, whose cubs are threatened by an invader, with this difference, that the tigress's ferocity has its redeeming features, in that she fights to preserve her offspring, and this fiend in woman's shape was actuated by no motives other than selfish ones. A stiletto gleamed in her hand, held tightly between her clenched fingers. This she pointed at Victor's throat, but being as agile as a fawn and as strong as a young giant, he very easily succeeded in wresting it from her, though not without cutting his hand pretty severely in the encounter.

Just as this tragic act was in course of performance, Sir James, hearing loud and angry voices on the lawn, stepped out hastily, just in time to endeavour to settle the dispute.

The old man was too horrified to speak. The flash of the steel dagger sent a chill through his system, which seemed to freeze the blood in his veins; but recovering his self-possession almost instantly, he called out for help in anguished screams, which awakened Bertha from her sleep or trance in the yellow drawing-room, and hastily aroused all the servants, who quickly flocked around their terrified master and his infuriated niece.

Victor furiously denounced Miss Montgamboire. The young lady as indignantly accused him of being the sole perpetrator of the attempted deed of violence. Sir James was utterly at a loss to take in the situation, or in any way to trace such direful effects to their true cause.

As is usual in such scenes, when passions triumph over right and reason, havoc and chaos gain undisputed possession of the field, while all attempts to reconcile the combatants, or get both sides to confess their share of the wrong done, are worse than useless. Our readers will, no doubt, as they survey the situation with cool, impartial eyes, attribute the blame, where it justly belongs, to the impassioned and unreasoning young woman, who, fearing she might lose her fortune through her father's intimacy with a stranger whom she doubtless admired and feared, and fancied she loved, was determined either to make that stranger her husband, and then her slave, or else in a fit of passion remove her rival from her path.

To a foster-father who idolized his daughter by adoption, and yet was all too conscious of the fatal strength of her am-

bition, and saw but too keenly, for his own happiness, the terrible lack of principle and utter destitution of gratitude for favours copiously bestowed, the situation was a most trying one, and in his state of health, one likely to shorten his days on earth. Taking his niece by one hand and Victor by the other, he implored them to come into his private room immediately, and there make full and free explanations of all that occurred. Finding, however, that nothing but angry, burning words of hate and scorn seemed likely to fall from the lips of either, no matter how long they submitted themselves to his searching catechizing,—for he had become calm and very firm after the first awful excitement had passed away,—Sir James sent for Bertha to join them at once in his study, and there allow that wonderful gift of clairvoyance which she possessed in so marked a degree, and had employed so reliably and helpfully in many difficult circumstances in the past, to unravel the mystery, if possible, and make straight the tangled skein of these untoward and alarming events.

Scarcely had she entered the room, when her eyes closed tightly, and her whole person became rigid. After offering a fervent prayer in trance, that the powers of good might completely rout the forces of darkness, she detailed every circumstance, and repeated every word which had passed between Victor and Miss Montgamoire in the garden, with vivid distinctness. As the oracle stood there disclosing even the inmost secrets of the hearts of those before her, her face became transfigured and transformed. She appeared as an aged man, in general aspect, not unlike the pictures we sometimes see of Socrates; and had this great philosopher dictated every thought, and Demosthenes been the speaker, a greater combination of wisdom, power and eloquence could scarcely have been a possible result.

Neither Victor nor the woman whose perfidy was brought to light, justly though not unmercifully, could do other than bow their heads in reverential silence, and declare that nothing was extenuated, nothing exaggerated or omitted, but every word spoken rang with the genuine ring of unsullied, unvarnished truth.

After two hours of earnest converse, Sir James decided to accept the advice of the controlling spirit, who had breathed such sage and timely words of counsel. He and his niece were to go their separate ways, from that night forward. She

might have an allowance of £500 a-year for life, if her uncle chose to make it her, which he did, besides making her a handsome present in addition. He, for the benefit of his health, nay, for the saving of his life, after this awful shock, was as soon as possible to set sail for California, taking Victor with him as his physician, secretary, and friend.

Bertha was to be invited to go with them, but, poor girl, she had her bitterest trial in life then to undergo, for she was a minor under Mrs. Sweetgeese's supervision, and her fate was to lose her brother and go back to the dull, hard life at Silvern Terrace ; but the sequel will prove that even that cross was sanctified and blest.



## CHAPTER XXII.

## DARKNESS BEFORE DAYBREAK.

ALL that could be done was done by Sir James, and Lady Armadale, and Lady Bun, and indeed by almost all of Bertha's wealthy and influential friends, to take Bertha away from Mrs. Sweetgeese, and allow her to travel to the Pacific Coast with her brother. In vain did one after another of her best and truest friends persuade, coax, threaten. Mrs. Sweetgeese saw now that her hour of triumph had come. She had been checkmated and set aside pretty considerably of late, and not even the tempting offers of gold made to her, as Bertha's ransom by Sir James, had the slightest power to move her from her set purpose of keeping Bertha with her, no matter what might be the consequences to any one or any number of persons.

Bertha was considerably under age, and through legal pettifogging and a large amount of false swearing on the part of Mrs. Sweetgeese and her friends, the lawsuit brought against her for unlawful appropriation of her niece's property, and unlawful detention of her person, ended in her favour; and the prosecuting party, defeated yet by no means ignominiously, had to pay all costs, though the damages claimed by Mrs. Sweetgeese for libel were not awarded.

To Sir James the costs were nothing, but the mortification of a defeat was not only intensely harassing to his shattered nerves; it was still more humiliating to his pride, especially when he discovered that it was largely, we may say mainly, through the influence of his own adopted daughter and natural niece, Lydia, that Mrs. Sweetgeese owed her triumphs.

Lydia had now turned saint, had given up all the pomps and vanities of the world, at least for a season, and had cast in her lot with the sisters at the Home of S. Ursula, in Dalston, where as an associate or lay sister, she wore a modified sister's dress, and was constantly engaged about the altars in the church adjoining the Home, for which she agreed to furnish

the flowers for a year at her own expense ; and as floral decorations were a very large item, amounting usually to over £150 a-year, the offer was rejoicingly accepted by the priests and mother superior, who were not overanxious to enquire into Lydia's antecedents, especially when they found her an excellent beggar, and one who was always ready to take a subscription-paper with her when she went out for her daily constitutional exercise. At this Home one of the Misses Tavernsby was also an associate, and by means of this designing female, an underground system of communication was easily kept up with the Sweetgeese household.

Lydia in presence of Sir James was humble and penitent, hoping by mock-humility to win back the affection, which she knew meant the gold of her long-suffering and much-abused protector ; but Victor, seeing with half an eye through the filmy disguise of assumed contrition and sanctity, pretty effectually played the part of the angel with the flaming sword, who guarded the gate of her earthly paradise.

Having, however, accomplished Bertha's misery, she was, in her idea of happiness, far happier and far more reconciled to fate, than though she had been the only sufferer from her own misconduct. Hers was one of those contemptible natures, which can take a despicable pleasure in witnessing the results of its own wickedness, in the misery it has brought upon others.

So long as such dispositions are to be met with on earth, one need not wonder at men having imagined a hell, and peopled it with spirits of evil ; and if there be those who can admire such wanton injustice, we need not feel surprised any longer at the existence in theology of gods, who take active interest and positive pleasure in the sufferings of spirits, who have often innocently and ignorantly incurred their unreasoning displeasure.

While higher beings than man undoubtedly exist, while heavens innumerable are no doubt populated with shining throngs of pure and happy spirits, who are far removed from the multifarious and humiliating weaknesses of humanity, yet the spiritual disclosures of every clime and age distinctly reveal to us, that we form individually no higher idea of Deity than that idea which answers to our own loftiest aspirations, as the influences we attract by our own state of mind, if it be dark and earthly, play the part of fog or opaque vapour,

which coming between us and the clear, blue sky of heavenly harmony, lighted by the golden luminaries of celestial love and wisdom, shut out from our vision all sight of what is beyond the murky, earth-begotten shadows, as the smoke from the chimneys of a vast manufacturing centre may so completely obscure the sunlight, that even at noonday, the sun to us is as though it were not and shone not.

It may be hard in this life to trace out divine goodness in everything, but even here and now there are many rifts in the clouds which beset our earthly pathway, and though the powers of evil may seemingly triumph awhile, yet "how soon do they perish, and come to a fearful end."

It may be asked : What had Bertha done to deserve so grievous a chastening, as the removal of the beloved brother on whom she leaned for all that made life delightful to her ? Why should she be allowed to suffer so grievously for the sins of another, in which she had not participated ? Why was a man born blind in Palestine, in the days of Christ, not because he had sinned nor because his parents had sinned before him, but that the glory of God might be displayed ? And what is the glory of God, about which we hear so much and understand so little ? Surely naught else than the furtherance of whatsoever is really best for all his children.

Sometimes we need the lessons which only joy can teach us ; again, we require to be taught in the school of adversity ; and truly rounded-out can those only be, who have learned in every school of life the lessons life can teach, and who, profiting by every earth-experience, learn to set their affections very strongly upon no other object than a heavenly one, which being eternal can never be removed by time or distance or any outward thing.

Bertha, though scarcely more than nineteen years of age, had already come to need the severe discipline of removal from the one whom she loved most dearly upon earth, and though in the last sad hours of parting, and the weary hopeless days and weeks which followed upon their separation, she felt deserted by all in heaven and earth, and was utterly inconsolable, still in after years she learned to find in this, the greatest sorrow of her youthful life, the very means to that end for which she had been born.

Only about ten days intervened between the termination of the lawsuit and the departure of Sir James and Victor for

climes remote. It would be needless to harrow the feelings of our readers by endeavouring to detail the anguish of our heroine, as day after day passed away, till at length the morning broke which was to carry her darling brother far away beyond the seas, and leave her desolate and alone in the clutches of her mercenary and scheming aunt.

Happily for youth and innocence, "nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," cannot long be held at bay, even by the most crushing weight of sorrow which is ever laid on youthful hearts. Bertha was at this period of her history blessed with a sound, healthy, and almost robust constitution, so after weeping on her brother's shoulder with her arms twined round his neck, till she was completely exhausted, she suffered him to disengage himself from her embrace, and gently lay her down on the spacious sofa in the room where they were accustomed to hold their sittings, and enjoy their private talks after the occupations of the busy day were ended. She could not endure the thought of undressing and going to bed, so with the door wide open between this, her boudoir, and her brother's room in which he retired for the night as usual, she slept serenely and soundly till the dressing bell at 7.30 awoke her on the following morning, to the stern and bitter realities of that long-to-be-remembered day, which in all her after-life she could never think of without a moistening of the eyes and a quivering of the lips.

The steamer was to sail from Liverpool at 4.30 p.m. Sir James and Victor, accompanied by Bertha, were to leave Euston at 9.30 a.m., when after a five hours' journey they were due in Liverpool at 2.30. There they were to take their last dinner together, and Bertha, accompanied by Lady Bun, who insisted on going with them and doing all she could to console the poor girl, was to see her brother off and sob out her last farewell, just as the steamer was about to leave the wharf.

Of course the delicious dinner, delicately served in a private sitting-room of the St. Cloud hotel, was a hollow mockery. Victor was the only person at the table who even tried to make a meal, and as he was very strong and had a hearty appetite, even the thought of parting from his dearly-cherished sister, could not render him completely insensible to the tempting viands so freely spread before him. Bertha managed to eat a few mouthfuls her brother literally forced down her

throat. Lady Bun and Sir James each took a little soup and some grapes.

They could not any of them bear the presence of servants or strangers as witnesses of their emotion, so dismissing the waiters they spent their last hour together, till the cab came to conduct them to the landing stage, where they arrived just in time to get on board the tender boat, before it set out to meet the steamer which, owing to its colossal size, could not advance very near the shore.

On the tender, four gentlemen, friends of Mrs. Sweetgeese, made their appearance in the interests of that lady, to guard against the possibility of Bertha escaping with her brother, to whom she clung in an agony of love and misery, when the last moment arrived, and all who were not passengers were ordered off the ship.

Had the four gentlemen not been there, there is little reason for supposing that Bertha would have returned to the shore, for just as the bell was ringing to give warning of the starting of the vessel, in a paroxysm of uncontrollable grief and affection, she threw her arms around her brother, who at once drew her to him and held her in his strong arms, so tightly to his breast, refusing to relax his hold, that the four gentlemen combined had all they could do to wrench her from him, and leap with her, struggling frantically to escape, into the tender, where Lady Bun with streaming eyes received her with open arms, and upon whose breast she fainted, after sobbing loudly and wildly, just as they regained the landing stage.

This kind and gentle lady cared for Bertha as tenderly as though she were her own child, and when one of the four gentlemen who had been her captors, and who was a physician of some eminence, and the father of a family, saw how tremendous a blow to her affections and her health her parting from her brother had been, he confessed to her ladyship, that had he had the least idea of the kind of person Mrs. Sweetgeese really was, and the strength of the affection existing between the brother and sister, he would have seen her at Jericho rather than have assisted in the slightest measure to further her designs.

Lady Bun urged upon the doctor the utter madness of allowing Bertha to return to Silvern Terrace, and become again the drudge of the household there, and as both she and her very dear friend Lady Armadale, who was then in Scot-

land, were deeply attached to Bertha, she proposed the very feasible plan of taking the young lady home with her, and arranging with Lady Armadale for Bertha to divide her time between the residences of herself and friend.

To this suggestion both Bertha and the doctor readily and gladly acceded, but there were three other representatives of the absent Mrs. Sweetgeese to be interviewed and consulted, and by all of them, every plan proposed in Bertha's interest was treated as a deliberate attempt to set aside the authority of Mrs. Sweetgeese, and encourage her wayward niece in open rebellion against her saintly and much-injured aunt.

One of these gentlemen was a priest of S. Cyprian's, a young man recently ordained and still in deacon's orders, whose college record had been anything but creditable, and whose lack of anything approaching to talent or business ability had distinguished him as the dunce of his class when at Eton. Another of these worthy men was a lawyer, about whom nothing very advantageous could with truth be told. The third was a "man about town," a gentlemanly loafer who was well known as an habitué of clubs and gaming tables, and who was always on the look-out for a good dinner or stalls at the theatre, at somebody else's expense, and who made it a point never to walk a step, even in the finest weather, when he could manage to induce some acquaintance to believe in his corms and pay for a cab, that his poor feet might not suffer too severely by coming in such close contact with the paving-stones, as tender feet must when they are always encased in silken hose and the daintiest, thinnest and tightest of French walking-slippers.

These three brilliant and noble specimens of manhood, vetoed every proposal made by Lady Bun and the kind and sensible doctor; so after a protracted and most annoying harangue, nothing could be decided upon but that Bertha must proceed straightway to London, and be there submitted to her aunt's control, until her twenty-first birthday. Then, of course, did she persist in her desire to join her brother, no legal pressure could be brought to bear, should she choose to follow him to California, or for that matter, to the antipodes.

Lady Bun, determining not to be completely thwarted in her benevolent designs, resolved on escorting Bertha to her aunt's, and with the doctor's assistance she hoped to be able to induce Mrs. Sweetgeese to allow the distracted girl to

spend a few weeks at her quiet and comfortable suburban villa.

Return to London that night she pronounced an impossibility, and as the doctor fully supported her in her decision, rooms were secured at the hotel, and all that could be done was done to make Bertha as contented as possible under the trying circumstances. But all in vain did the kind lady and the skillful doctor try to soothe the restless and well-nigh frantic girl. She passed rapidly from one hysterical fit into another, till by nightfall she was in a high fever, raving in delirium, frantically calling upon her brother to rescue her from the pit in which she was being held down by Mrs. Sweetgeese and a curate, and in which she was stifling for want of air and liberty.

Once the doctor laid his hand gently on her fevered forehead, and addressing a few kind, consolatory words to her, endeavoured to assuage the anguish of her mind; but all in vain, indeed all attempts at consolation seemed only to intensify and aggravate her misery, for when she sufficiently regained consciousness to realize that her would-be comforter was not her brother, she had another convulsive attack of weeping, which soon brought on a racking cough and a threatening of hemorrhage from the lungs.

The doctor was fairly frightened, even more so than Lady Bun, who after the toil and excitement of the long day, was nodding peacefully in a cozy arm-chair by the fire. She was a very tender-hearted woman, but so thoroughly tired out was she with the harassing incidents of the day, and so utterly unaccustomed an actor in so distressful a drama, that fight against it as best she might, sleep would insist on closing her watchful eyes, while it allowed her perturbed mind and ruffled spirits to gain something of their wonted calm, as her liberated soul enjoyed some blest communion with the hosts invisible, who, though in local presence are no nearer to us at night than through the day, can often make us far more fully aware of their proximity when the curtains of night are drawn between us and the outer world, and we are not called away from a refreshing realization of spiritual verities, by the incessant and noisy clamour of externals demanding our attention.

It may be asked, and that very pertinently by many of our readers: Why Bertha, who was so finely-developed a seeress, could not have passed into the trance, and, in communion

with the world of spirits, have found all needed solace for her earthly woes? It may even be demanded: Why could she not, by aid of some occult power she possessed, have accompanied her brother in spirit on his journey, and been satisfied with being thus his invisible companion?

Had she been a person who had overcome all the purely material yearnings of life completely; had she been a well-developed adept, in whose breast all purely physical emotions had been for ever stilled, this stupendous feat of magic might have been performed by her, or by her spirit-friends on her behalf; but though a very pure and conscientious girl, untainted by the grosser passions of mankind; though a most remarkable and singularly accomplished clairvoyante, seeress, lucide, somnambule, or medium, whichever word one chooses to employ to designate a person possessed of her rare spiritual gifts, she was still intensely human, and had a very strong hold upon the material world, and a keen sense of the joys and sorrows of physical existence. Her very sensitiveness, which was the necessary concomitant of her mediumship, rendered her more rather than less conscious of physical happiness or deprivation, as no greater mistake can be made than to suppose that because one is highly impressible or mediumistic, that therefore he or she is less sensible than ordinary of the good and evil of this life.

Sensitiveness always carries with it its bane and blessing, its cross and crown. The two co-exist: without the one we cannot have the other. If one is unusually affected by lovely sounds and delicious perfumes, then as a matter of necessity the self-same individual must be just as keenly alive to the slightest discord or the least unpleasant odour. If one is easily buoyed up by a little success, easily made glad by a little kindness, then as easily is he saddened and depressed, when things go a little wrong and friends and acquaintances are a little harsh and cold.

Some ask, why Spiritualists, and mediums especially, should sorrow when their friends vacate the material form and join the ranks of the hosts invisible to eyes of clay. "Is it not," say some, "because Spiritualism is a delusion, after all?—a fair-weather friend who departs in the hour of adversity."

By no means. The Spiritualist can realize immortal life more fully in the chamber of earthly dissolution than anywhere else in the world. At the hour of transition, clairvoy-

ant eyes can often gaze upon the enraptured countenance of the spirit, newly awakened to the sublime delights of the spirit-world. The sadness, the earthly grief and pain are not evidences of disbelief in immortality; they are no signs of a faltering faith in the blessed truth of spirit-communion. They are mere indications of earthly weakness on the part of those who have yet to linger, it may be for many years, in the material world, while the bosom-friend and most beloved companion is on another plane of being; and it is the restless longing to have our friends beside us, on our own plane of life, subject to the same limitations as ourselves, that gives poignancy to sorrow in the hour of parting.

No matter where we may be, in what estate of life, we may suffer from a sense of bereavement until our spirits have gained a full and final victory over matter; and then redeemed completely from the thraldom of the senses, we shall sigh no more for physical companionship, hanker no more after the relationships of sense and time, but be completely satisfied with such spiritual unions as are possible in absolutely spiritual states of being, where soul communion can never be interrupted by any possible barrier erected by the circumstances of material life.

Bertha needed, in this her separation from the only person for whom she really cared on earth, to learn her first bitter lesson concerning the instability of all things earthly. She needed to be weaned through biting sorrow, from a too close attachment to the sordid unrealities of time; and though, at nineteen, the lesson was a very hard one, still, the earlier lessons are learned the easier they are often mastered, and how consolatory is the thought, that throughout eternity we can never need to learn the same lesson or master the same temptation twice. If the lesson be once learned, the temptation once overcome, that suffices for ever; and if the lesson be only partially studied and the temptation only measureably vanquished, that limited modicum of triumph is so much towards the final victory, so much strength and knowledge stowed away for the next encounter.

"Nothing is lost, from the atom to the Deity: no thought can perish, no faintest aspiration of the soul can count for naught, no secret tear be shed in vain, no bosom heave a single sigh; but he who marks the sparrows, treasures up that tear, that sigh, that effort, and in the archives of eternity its

place and results will be comprehended by our no more bewildered brains, and rendered plain as a part of the beneficent plan of infinite love and wisdom, which includes the universe, to our no longer tear-dimmed eyes, which having cast aside the glass of matter, through which they have so long seen but dimly, will gaze face to face, without a veil or cloud between, upon the matchless justice of the universe."

The foregoing brilliant sentences, of deep philosophical and spiritual import, are culled from a trance oration delivered though the lips of Bertha, at a time when the heavens seemed as brass above her head, and the earth a dreary waste, upon which it was but abject misery a moment longer to reside.

As a surpassing evidence of the power her guides actually possessed, we have only to cite the foregoing passage from a lecture on "The blessedness of Human Sorrow," delivered in public when she was too weak to rise from the sofa on which she lay prostrate, without assistance, to demonstrate to what a marvellous extent spirits are capable of overcoming physical weakness, and transcending a thousandfold, in their utterances through her entranced lips, all the despondent theories of the instrument, over whose mind and body an organized band of spirits can exert almost unlimited control.

Returning from these reflections, suggested to us by Bertha's misery occasioned by her brother's departure for a far-off land, we must resume our duty as historian, and endeavour, in as few words as possible, to tell the tale of an hitherto untried and most eventful portion of our heroine's career.

Before the narrative is ended and the reader lays down the book, we hope and believe no unprejudiced mind will have failed to have received some little light upon one of the most vexed and distracting problems of human life, and that is, the co-existence of misery and suffering with the reign of infinite and eternal justice. Though written in the style of a popular romance, and occasionally introducing ludicrous scenes and sayings, at which no reader unless he be a veritable hypochondriac or misanthrope can suppress a laugh, it is scarcely necessary for the author to say, that this little book will have fallen woefully short of its mission, if it do no more than amuse the public and increase the notoriety of the author.

That the good which sprang out of evil, in Bertha's case, may help many a reader to find the blessing in his own trial, is our sincerest prayer as we proceed upon our way.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## SUNRISE OF A NEW DAY.

BERTHA, escorted by Lady Bun and Doctor Peters, was with some difficulty moved to London on the following day.

Arriving at Silvern Terrace, utterly dejected and looking the mere ghost of her former self, even her aunt was disposed to be less exacting and severe than usual.

The train leaving Liverpool at one reached Euston at six, and after half-an-hour's drive in Lady Bun's carriage, which she had ordered to meet them at the station, Bertha and her friends were deposited at Silvern Terrace.

Dinner was in progress when they arrived; the boarders were in full force at the table, but not one of them could resist putting down knife, fork and spoon, and giving a prolonged look to Bertha, who was almost inanimate and white as death, and was helped into the room and on to the sofa, by the doctor and coachman together.

Such a change as the past two days had wrought in the bright, young girl was dreadful to behold: all her youth, health and spirits seemed to have been crushed out of her by one fell blow. Her eyes were lustreless and swollen with unshed tears. Her cheeks were livid, of ashy paleness, save where her tears had furrowed out two long, deep, red courses, where they seemed to have burned into her flesh, and dyed it vermillion, as they scalded their way from her heavy, almost blinded, eyes. Her hair hung in unkempt tresses down her back, adding considerably to the wildness and desolation of her general appearance. A sadder, more forlorn picture an artist would have great difficulty in finding or portraying.

Even Mr. Catseyes was moved to compassion, while the eldest Miss Tavernsby took out her handkerchief, and sighing deeply wiped a tear from both her eyes. Though a spinster, and over forty, perhaps she remembered some sorrow of her own youthful days, and as we are none of us quite dead to the divine power of sympathy, and most, if not all, of us have some skeleton hidden away in a cupboard, even though the world

knows nothing of our grief, the sight of one so young in such abandonment of sorrow cannot leave us quite unmoved, and by moving us even to one tear or sigh of sympathy, it softens the hardness of our hearts and renders us somewhat more disposed to respond to the overtures of conscience.

Mrs. Sweetgeese, who was by nature a nervous and effusive woman, wept copiously when Lady Bun, her voice breaking with emotion, implored her to be gentle with her niece, and not allow her to over-tax her strength.

Doctor Peters spoke strongly and professionally on the subject, and his words, addressed to Mrs. Sweetgeese in the hearing of all at table, produced a visible impression on his audience.

Doctor Peters was a medical man, and one who stood high in his calling. He was, moreover, a staunch Churchman, though not a Ritualist, and being, so far as people knew, in no way tainted with the absurd and pestilential heresy of Spiritualism, to which it was well known Lady Bun had unequivocally committed herself, his words were likely to have 100 per cent. more weight than any utterances of her ladyship; though the Sweetgeese crew worshipped titles, and would have licked the very dust at the feet of any titled man or woman, if only for the privilege of claiming intimacy with those whose names appear in that most sacred of all volumes next the Bible and the Prayer Book, the blue book, on whose pages are inscribed the names of that unapproachable fraternity, who constitute what is known as the upper ten thousand.

Lady Bun's pedigree was as long as your arm, traced out in fine print in the blue book. Lady Armadale's was even longer. Talk of tracing back one's ancestry to the Norman Conquest! the Armadale's regarded the reign of William the Conqueror as an event of yesterday. They were blood relations of the Caesars, and were an old Roman Patrician family, when Julius took up his royal pen, and dipping it in the imperial ink manufactured for his especial use in the unrivalled capital of that empire, which was 2,000 years ago as great as England is to-day, wrote the words which no centuries of rolling time can e'er efface:—

*"Omnis Gallia in tres partes divisa est."*

Could Mrs. Sweetgeese remain impervious to the entreaties of a woman, herself a lady of title, who was the intimate

friend of the august and venerable house of Armadale ? Surely Bertha's lines must now have fallen in pleasant places, even though her brother was removed ; and had she been a girl who worshipped rank and fashion, a butterfly of fashion whose affections had never been touched, she might easily have overcome any annoyances to which her aunt subjected her, and chaperoned by high-born dames have been the idol of another London season. She might, indeed, soon have made one of the best marriages of the day, and entered the sacred precincts of that charmed circle of aristocracy, upon whose borders she was now so familiarly standing. But it was reserved for Bertha to consecrate her life and talent to a holier work than that assigned to the belles of ball and opera, and the beautiful mothers whose children are left in the care of hirelings, while they and their puggies ride from three till five each afternoon in Rotten Row. And so she made no effort to scale the wall, and let herself down into the gardens of nobility. She had lost her love of life, but not her powers of usefulness, and during the six weeks of severe illness which followed her return to Silvern Terrace, she was prepared by her invisible instructors for the mighty work in which so soon she was, in good earnest, to engage.

Mrs. Sweetgeese was not unkind, neither were the Tavernsby's. Doctor Peters saw his patient twice daily during her illness, and when at length she was able to leave her room, her first outing was a drive in his carriage to the residence of Lady Armadale, who had just returned from Scotland, and welcomed Bertha with open arms, though with a terribly shocked countenance, when she saw how very frail and shrunken she had grown during her painful sickness.

No one who had seen and heard Bertha three months ago, would have recognised her. Her most intimate friends might have passed her in the street as a stranger. Her beauty had faded, and her voice had become almost inaudible, even in speaking, while her ringing laugh had ceased altogether. She was still very ill, by no means out of danger. Her throat was dry and sore, her chest racked with coughing, and whenever she attempted to exert herself ever so slightly, a sharp pain would seize her in the region of the heart, as though a knife were thrust into her vitals.

Occasionally during her confinement to her couch, she would pass into a trance, when her whole face became illuminated ;

the weariness and pain would seem all gone, and lying on her back she would give spiritual teachings of the most exalted character, to whoever might be present and wishful to interrogate the spirits. But even her guides made no promises that they would completely restore her health. When Lady Bun, who had been a constant attendant at her bedside, asked the controlling spirit whether something might not be done to insure her recovery : all the answer she received was, that nothing but the magnetism of some strong, healthy, sympathetic psychologist could re-invigorate her physical frame, and that they could give no immediate clue to the whereabouts of a person whose influence would accomplish the much-to-be-desired result.

When Lady Armadale saw Bertha, she was completely overcome with mingled emotions, in which compassion for the sufferer was scarcely stronger than indignation for those who had caused the suffering. Turning to Lady Bun, almost angrily, she enquired :—

“ What in the world has come over you, to allow that poor child to stay with that detestable aunt all through her illness, when you were alone in your house with the servants ? ”

“ My dear Lady Armadale,” remonstrated the other lady, mildly : “ What could I do under the circumstances ? Mrs. Sweetgeese sent four delegates to Liverpool, who accosted us on the landing stage. Three of them were perfect boors ; one was a gentleman, and he is the doctor who has been attending her through her illness. I could do nothing whatever in the matter, but I am sure Dr. Peters has done all that could be done for our poor young friend during all this sad season.”

“ Indeed, my lady, he has been kindness itself,” assented Bertha, with whom the doctor was a great favourite. “ But no one can make me well and happy now, unless they can bring back Victor. You are all very kind, and, believe me, I am not ungrateful ; but no one can ever take his place, and unless he return to me or I go to him, I don’t want to live any longer.”

“ Nonsense ! child. Don’t talk about dying at your age and with your prospects. Why, it’s positively wicked ; but, there now, don’t cry. I know I mustn’t speak harshly. You are all tired out, and your nerves are completely unstrung. Let’s have a sitting at my dear little table, through which

we have got so many good and helpful messages from our unseen friends. I'm sure Marie Antoinette or some of my advisers will have something to say, that will throw light on our present troubles."

With these words, Lady Armadale drew her little, round, inlaid table near to the fire, and helping Bertha into a soft cozy chair next to her own, the three ladies placed their hands lightly on the table, which soon began to rock gently to and fro.

Lady Armadale always sought the table, whenever she was perplexed or needed advice of any kind. She was quite unmindful of the would-be-scientific explanations of table-tipping, given by those who can only advance one step in the direction of discovering the true *modus operandi* of the phenomenon. She knew as well as Dr. Beeswax, Professor of Chemistry at Hogarth Seminary, that animal magnetism was the agent at work in the production of the movements. She knew that a subtle fluid left her body, saturated the wood and caused the table to oscillate, even when her fingers did not touch it, as was often the case; and had no communications ever been given transcending the information she or her fellow-sitters already possessed, she might have been satisfied with Professor Carpingdale's theory of unconscious cerebration, or with Dr. Noodle's back-brain hypothesis. But over and over again had she received absolutely incontrovertible evidence of the action of independent minds, whose statements were afterwards fully verified, and having tried and tested the spirits who came to her, and used her vital fluids as electricity is used in telegraphy for the transmission of news from place to place, she went to them for instruction and advice; not as though they were arbitrary lords or sovereigns, before whom she must blindly bow in unreasoning submission to their every command, but as to kind and more experienced friends, whose sage and loving counsel could help her when her own resources were inadequate to meet the severe demands made upon them. Never exacting, carping, or captious, she received the tests for which she never clamoured, and these spontaneous, unsolicited tests which she had been receiving with scarcely any intermission for more than fifteen years, made of Lady Armadale a Spiritualist of the staunchest and the truest type.

She was often wont to say:—

"Let them expose the mediums, if they will, let them attribute all the public phenomena to charlatanism, if they are too blind to discover anything higher than trickery in it: Will these '*exposures*' shake my confidence in the beautiful immortals who come to me in my own boudoir, in my own chamber, and substantiate their claim upon my confidence by reiterated proofs of their wisdom and sincerity? No, a thousand times no. 'I *know* wherein *I* have believed,' I can give a reason for the faith that is in me, to any who shall ask me; and if a poor, blind, intellectual bat cannot behold the light which is so great a blessing to my eyes, Shall I deny the light because he, poor unfortunate, cannot see it?"

Without further expatiation upon Lady Armadale's attitude towards table-tipping, let us join the circle of three, whom we left sitting round the table in the drawing-room of Lady Armadale's mansion, in Grosvenor Square, and hear the strange advice and prophecy which is there being delivered through the instrumentality of a piece of polished board.

One of the first questions asked was: "You know how anxious we are about our dear Bertha, Will you direct us how to proceed, that she may be quickly restored to health?"

Answer, spelled out alphabetically: "Take her to concert to-morrow."

No more could they receive in response to their numerous interrogations. In her present delicate state of health it seemed rash and imprudent in the extreme, to take her at night into a hot and crowded room.

Bertha was very reluctant, indeed, about going. She knew how terribly she would realize her brother's absence, at a time and in a place when and where everything would speak so loudly to her of him, by force of that wondrous power of association which affects us all so strongly and mysteriously.

She and Lady Bun pleaded together, that this sentence passed by the invisibles might be revoked; but Lady Armadale would not hear of such a thing. She declared some great catastrophe would overtake them if they disobeyed the spirits, not because she feared their anger or entertained any nonsensical ideas about their paying people out for disobedience. She had simply unbounded confidence in their judgment, and as that confidence had never been betrayed, she felt justified in reposing it implicitly in those who had never deceived her.

She was no externalist, who depended upon outward evidences for recognition of her spirit-friends. She could discern spirits spiritually. She knew them by the influence they carried with them ; and should any spirit have attempted to personate another, no matter how well the voice or appearance might be imitated, she would at once see through the counterfeit, as she knew her friends by the life-influence they generated and dispensed. One of her favourite illustrations was the following :—

“Supposing,” said she, to a friend, “all my means of recognising you are physical, then, when you pass into spirit-life, I shall not know you : but if I know your mind and spirit here, then death can but improve our means of recognition. Supposing, however, here on earth, my knowledge of you is only physical, still, even on a physical basis, I may devise infallible means for recognising you. If I know you only by your eyes and hair, your height and size, your gestures and conversation, some one may be enough like you to disguise himself before me, and pass himself off for you. But if I can detect your magnetic aura, so that I know when you have been in my room, though I have not seen you enter it or leave it, and no one has informed me you have called, then I cannot be deceived by any masquerading, as no one who assumes your appearance can work such changes in his system as to generate precisely the force by which I know you from all others. If a dog can track his master by the scent, and others of the animal creation can do likewise, shall man, the highest type of nature upon earth, and the highest we *know* of in the Realm of Spirit, be left destitute of means of friendly recognition, which are possessed in measure by inferior creatures ? ”

Lady Armadale was an unanswerable philosopher : no one entered into debate with her and overcame her, and that for two reasons : first, she was a singularly apt logician ; second, she never expressed opinions on a subject unless she knew something about it. So much for her ladyship’s practical and instructive theories on spirit-communion.

Bertha and Lady Bun remained to kettledrum, at five o’clock, and then, as the evenings were beginning to grow chilly early, it was now October, and both ladies dined at seven at their respective homes, Lady Bun took Bertha back to Silvern Terrace in her carriage, promising to persuade

Mrs. Sweetgeese to let her niece leave her house for Lady Armadale's on the following day, to spend at least a week with her.

On the following day Bertha, though still weak, was rather better. She had slept more comfortably. Her interview with Lady Armadale had evidently done her good, as she was less excited and hysterical than usual.

About 3 p.m., a loud rat-tat-tat made the servant-of-all-work's heart jump into her mouth, to use the young woman's own expressive words, as Lady Armadale's footman announced the approach of his titled mistress.

"Is Mrs. Sweetgeese in," inquired the haughty and faultlessly attired upper servant of the miserable, dejected-looking, boarding-house drudge, who was this time a girl recommended from a penitentiary, by the Tavernsbyes and Lydia Montgamboire.

"Yes, sir, she's in, but she's asleep."

"Tell her Lady Armadale desires to see her on important business, and that immediately, and that her horses are waiting in the wind," pursued the footman, overpoweringly.

So, though the girl had received directions never to disturb her mistress during her forty winks in the afternoon, which she found necessary after a liberal allowance of old port wine and stilton cheese, with which she finished her lunch, she could not summon up courage to disobey the commands of so august a footman, who conveyed a message from so imperial a dignity as a real, live, lady of title, whom Sally thought could only be next in glory to the saints, to whom she prayed in her devotions night and morning.

Mrs. Sweetgeese was, with difficulty aroused, and when she was thoroughly awakened, she was much discomfitted. Her cap was dirty, her hair was awry, and showed the grey locks under the handsome chestnut front, which had cost her £3 3s. at Tredbutts very recently. However, she rushed up to her room, and made herself presentable, while Lady Armadale fanned herself by an open window in the stuffy sitting-room, from which fresh air was as a rule rigorously excluded.

After keeping her ladyship waiting fully ten minutes, Mrs. Sweetgeese put in an appearance, endeavouring to be peculiarly suave and deferential to so great a lady. It is needless to say, that after some remonstrance on the part of Mrs. Sweetgeese, Lady Armadale carried her point, and Bertha

was told to be ready in two hours to return to Grosvenor Square with Lady Armadale, who had other calls to make, and would pick her up on her way home at five o'clock.

Bertha, though very much attached to her ladyship, was so dispirited and weak, that she dreaded the concert more than she looked forward to the ease and comfort of Lady Armadale's beautiful and hospitable house; but after the refreshment, at 6.30, of which Lady Armadale forced her to partake, though she could only swallow liquids—she ate some oranges and drank some soup—she felt somewhat revived, though she was pale as death and trembled from head to foot, as she entered Cackleton Hall and took her seat in the second row of fauteuils, between Lady Armadale and Lady Bun.

The opening numbers passed off well, but Bertha either slept through them or remained so motionless that she appeared asleep. Once when Madame Assoretta's voice sounded out in a rich contralto solo from "Semiramide," she started, and gazing at the singer for a moment, with a heavy sigh relapsed into seeming unconsciousness again.

Lady Armadale was just beginning to wonder what purpose the invisibles had in view, when Signor Desolato Infuriori stepped upon the stage, to sing the *Cuius Animam*. Knowing this to be one of Victor's greatest triumphs, she was afraid that hearing another sing it, might prove too much for Bertha's nerves, and fearing such might be the case, she was about to offer to take Bertha into one of the retiring rooms, when the singer, bowing profoundly to the audience, caught sight of Bertha, and acknowledged her in public by a low bow, evidently meant for her alone.

With a smile and gentle inclination of the head, which no one would have noticed had they not been watching her intently, she returned the salute, and then, fixing her eyes upon the singer, she rivetted her gaze upon him as he sang the *aria* divinely. His high C was not a shriek this time—it was exquisitely taken,—and when in response to a deafening *encore*, he sang the entire *aria* again, his second rendering was, if possible, more faultless than the first.

Bertha, to Lady Armadale's and Lady Bun's astonishment, joined in the applause, and that heartily, while a fresh, warm glow of colour came into her pallid cheeks, and something like animation lighted up her dulled and saddened eyes.

Signor Infuriori retired bowing and triumphant, and Bertha

relapsed again into her seeming trance or sleep; but when towards the close of the second part of the programme, the great singer reappeared, she was alive again, and when in response to another *encore* he sang, "*Qui sola virgin rosa*," she fairly jumped from her seat in her enthusiasm.

Lady Armadale, who did everything on impulse, rushed into the *artistes'* room, and invited Signor Infuriori and Madame Assoretta both to supper, and while they hated each other, they were both beside themselves with delight, at being so publicly asked to seat themselves in as fine a carriage as ever rode down Rotten Row.

Bertha at the supper table was almost her old self, seated next the Signor, who adored her. She laughed and chatted as of yore, and when, at 3 a.m., the guests departed and Bertha went to bed, she went to sleep to dream of a grand opera house in Italy, and of herself as Prima Donna on its world-famous stage.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

## A NEW DEPARTURE.

MANY persons are mediums or psychics, who are not only quite ignorant of the fact of their own mediumship, but who know literally nothing of the spiritual philosophy or phenomena. What to some minds is stranger still, is that many who are violently opposed to Spiritualism, and even to mesmerism in all its phases, are themselves the very best of mediums and subjects, as mediumship is not conferred upon any one as the reward of faith. Mediums are not better or purer than other people, not more learned nor illiterate than others; they are simply more sensitive to outside influences than the generality of mankind, and in this sensitiveness consists their mediumship or subjectivity to the will and influence of others.

No study can be more fascinating and none more practical than that of the healing art. We have any number of duly qualified physicians and surgeons, who have passed a trying medical examination and shown themselves highly conversant with the principles of *materia medica*, but how few real healers have we among our countless medical practitioners!

Even Dr. Peters, kind and skilful fellow though he was, was quite at sea with regard to Bertha's ailments. He knew no more than an infant how to prescribe for her successfully. He confessed himself baffled and bewildered. He did not understand half her symptoms, and while he looked at her tongue and examined her pulse two or three times every day, all he could say was—

"Very strange, very distressing, I don't know what we shall do with her. Perhaps sea air or a tonic may gradually set her right."

He knew she was suffering from excessive debility; he knew she was painfully hysterical, and that her nerves were quite unstrung; but though it may be half the battle to know what is the matter with your patient in many cases, still, a person may starve while everybody around him knows he is hungry. So may a patient die of a malady of which the

physician is fully cognizant, if while he is acquainted with the ailment, he knows not how to cure it.

Signor Infuriori was an ignoramus on medical matters. He knew nothing whatever of the healing art. He gave all his time to music, fashion, and fashionable dissipations, and thus was the very last person to whom any one would have thought of applying, had they needed the services of a docto<sup>r</sup>, a psychologist, or a magnetic healer.

He was one of that large class of persons who have no decided views on science, philosophy, politics, or religion. So long as he was elegant and feted, he was happy. He interfered with no one's theories, and had none of his own which were sufficiently pronounced to be objectionable to any one. He was a flirt, a coxcomb, a conceited "la-di-dah," but at the same time a true *artiste*, and a person of some really kind and generous impulses.

One of his leading traits was a sort of easy benevolence. He was very indiscriminate in his almsgiving, but he gave alms. He was very much indisposed to investigate the merits of any case, but very glad to relieve suffering; as he hated to see it, and could not bear to talk, or hear, or read about it. The *lazaroni* in the streets were always glad to see him, as he often gave them a good handful of copper, and frequently silver when he had no pennies with him, and as he was usually rather flush of money, many were the coins he let fall among them. To see any one in trouble, always made him wish to help them overcome it, and when his affection or admiration was to any extent aroused, his wish to relieve was increased a thousandfold.

When first he saw Bertha, he fell in love with her. He did not wish to make her his wife, indeed he had no desire to enter the bonds of wedlock with anyone, but he conceived a warm feeling of respect and love for a young lady, who was certainly not of the *demi-monde*, and who possessed a voice of such rare beauty, that when a tenor sang a duet with her in opera, the tenor was always shown off to the very best advantage. So liquid, true, and sympathetic were all her tones, that they could not fail to help any one who was so fortunate as to be her companion vocalist.

Possessed naturally of a very fine constitution, and never having ruined it by wanton excess, Signor Infuriori was a great natural healer, and all unknown to himself and those

whom unconsciously he benefitted, he was a well-attuned instrument in the hands of powerful spirits, who knew how to direct his magnetism where it would be most serviceable to humanity.

When on the evening of the concert, mentioned in our last chapter, he stepped on the stage to sing *Cujus animam*, and caught sight of Bertha's pale, sad face, in the fauteuil exactly opposite him, an involuntary impulse to try and make her well and happy stirred his breast, and all the while he sang so faultlessly, he looked at her and watched the animation which his presence and singing brought into her previously rigid and colourless face. He was pleased and flattered. He felt sure she liked him, and this feeling increased his wish to help her, and his determination to be of service to her, if possible. So all the while he was throwing out his magnetism to the audience, his mind being peculiarly centred on her, she received the largest share of that subtle force, which must go somewhere, and necessarily flies most quickly and surely wheresoever it is most demanded, and where it finds the greatest disposition towards its reception.

Then Bertha, being a medium constantly attended by a band of strong and beneficent spirits, who would use every available means to secure her restoration to health and happiness, was ministered to by these invisibles, who knew how to gather forces from the atmosphere and emanations from the persons of others, and direct them to that spot where they could be made most available for good.

Mrs. Coral, on one occasion, when under control of her spirit-guides at a public reception, gave the following idea substantially with regard to the transit of magnetic life from place to place and person to person.

Magnetism, said she, or rather the intelligence who spoke through her, is not self-intelligent: it cannot direct its own movements, it must be guided by intelligence. Electricity will convey no message from any one or to any one, unless there be an intelligent mind to direct it. So in healing, vital forces not being self-conscious, material emanations not being endowed with will, it needs a spirit, either embodied or disembodied, as spirit alone is possessed of consciousness and will, to direct magnetic aura to that point in space, where its services are in demand.

This idea, beautifully elaborated in a discourse of singular

eloquence and power, by one of the greatest mediums the world has ever produced, contains, to our way of thinking, the only rational explanation of those countless repetitions of spontaneous cures, which are being effected daily in all parts of the world, and which lie at the root of those innumerable legends of the saints, which are unquestionably fanciful stories only so far as their most external habiliments of incident are concerned.

Miss Angle, in her charming descriptions of the Rhine, has unearthed multitudes of stories which all go to prove, that all through the centuries miracles have been taking place, infidelity to the contrary notwithstanding.

But what is a miracle? Miracle is derived from the Latin *miror*, to be astonished; and the correct etymological definition of miracles, is simply surprising occurrences; not by any means or in any sense events that are correctly speaking *supernatural*. For "supernatural" means above or beyond nature, and a miracle is governed strictly by purely natural laws, but by laws of nature, however, which are above and beyond the grasp and knowledge of ordinary minds, at the time and in the place when and where the action of these laws results in the astonishing occurrence designated popularly a miracle.

The morning after the concert, Bertha did not awake till after eleven o'clock, and when she did awaken, she scarcely knew where she was or how she got there. The scenes and incidents of her dream were so mingled with the actual splendours of the sumptuous room in which she found herself, that until her eyes were quite wide open, she almost fancied herself in some splendid Italian palace, to which she had been taken by a royal prince, whom in her dream she had seen gazing at her, when she was on the stage in Florence.

Her dreams, however, were soon dispelled by the entrance of Lady Armadale's lady's-maid, who crept in noiselessly with cat-like tread, to see how the young lady was faring, after the excitement and late hours of the previous night. Her ladyship had only awakened half-an-hour ago, and having just finished her breakfast in bed, despatched her maid to Bertha's room with chocolate and rolls and truffled turkey, to tempt her appetite.

For several weeks past, Bertha's throat had been too much

inflamed to allow of her taking any solid food, and this morning she could only soak her bread in the chocolate, and eat it that way, though she did manage to get down a little of the rich nutritious jelly which garnished the turkey, but the solid meat was quite beyond her.

12.30 saw her comfortably ensconced in any easy chair by the fire, in Lady Armadale's boudoir, with the little table between them, when Signor Infuriori's card was brought in with a request that its owner might be allowed the privilege of calling at three o'clock, to see how Signorina Berta was, after her late hours the previous night.

Lady Armadale sent out a polite message to the Signor's valet, who was waiting in the hall, that Miss Thrushleigh would be glad to see Signor Infuriori at three o'clock, though she herself should be out; but she requested Signor Infuriori to remain, if he had no other engagement, and take tea with both ladies at five o'clock, when Lady Armadale would have returned.

This slight and not unwelcome interruption to their sitting being over, they resumed their places at the famous little table, but to-day it gave no signs of life or animation. The ladies kept their hands upon it for fully half-an-hour, but no movement could they obtain; and this was very remarkable, for it usually commenced to oscillate vigorously directly Lady Armadale's hands were placed upon it.

To a sceptic, such absence of movement as this ought to carry considerable weight, in the way of convincing him that his anti-spiritualistic explanations of table movements are not sufficient to cover the ground. If the ladies moved it themselves, why did it remain stationary on this occasion, when their hands were placed upon it as usual, and they both desired its movement? The very absence of phenomena, which often causes so much complaint at *ssances*, is in itself an evidence, that when the phenomena do occur, they are not manufactured; for frequently when no phenomena can be obtained, the desire for them is greatest, and in the case of professional mediums, who have relied upon their medial powers for a livelihood, when they would have been liberally paid had manifestations taken place, they have received nothing for their time spent in the circle room, when manifestations were not forthcoming. This in itself is strong presumptive evidence, that conjuring is no explanation of the mystery, for the *prestidigitateur* can

always evolve "phenomena" with his apparatus, whenever he conducts an exhibition.

Though no movements of the table were forthcoming, Bertha's eyes soon closed, and she passed into a deep unconscious trance, during which her whole countenance became transfigured. Her voice and manner completely altered, and a spirit announcing himself as "a priest of ancient Egypt," 5,000 years ago, assumed control, and spoke wonderful prophetic words concerning Bertha's prospective career. A few of these words, which Lady Armadale recorded as they were spoken very deliberately, we will here reproduce, and before our story ends we shall see how truly the prophetic portion of them was verified to the very letter.

"You may wonder," said the spirit, "why Bertha has been called upon to suffer so severe a loss and bear so great a burden. You may wonder why her spirit friends did not so overrule events, that she and her beloved brother might have remained and worked together. We have other work for her to do; we have other work to do through her than could be done if the beloved object, on which she has set all her earthly affections, had been allowed to remain with her. He was necessary up to a certain stage in her development, to prepare her for our use, but his will is so immensely strong, and he exerts so great a control and fascination over her, that had he remained as her constant companion and magnetizer, he would have gained and held such exclusive control over her mind and body, that we should have been met with an engaged instrument instead of a free one; and for the work for humanity which we must needs perform through Bertha's organism, it is a matter of imperative necessity, that she should be held aloof from all other psychologic influence than our own. We are now preparing her for a great public work. She will henceforth be a most effective speaker on the platform, under our control. She will travel almost all over the world, before her earthly race is run. She will meet with more success than opposition, though her path will not always be strewn with roses; still her life will be a happy as well as a very busy one. She will cross the ocean soon, and over the Atlantic wave will meet with wider recognition, even than in England. She will then return to this her native land for a season, to go forth again with added power, to lands remote. Her name will become a household word wherever the English

language is spoken or understood. At the Antipodes she will find a rich and fruitful field of labour. Her health will be uniformly good, though she will never be singularly robust. To-morrow active steps must be taken for her to make her *début* in St. Michael's Hall. After a short season in London, she will have a most successful provincial tour; then after two years' work in England, her work will be in the United States, where she will plant herself firmly upon the rock of the people's love."

With these and many other words, this spirit, the leader of the band controlling Bertha, outlined her future path, and gave directions for the commencement of her active public lecturing career.

Lady Armadale was not surprised, but as Bertha's voice was still so weak as to be almost inaudible, she wondered how the volume of sound necessary to fill the large St. Michael's Hall was to be produced; but as she always carried out the wishes of the spirits, and they had never led her on a wild-goose chase as yet, she determined upon following their advice on this occasion, as implicitly and expeditiously as on others; and with such chaperonage as she was able to supply, a young lady, who had sung in the best and largest halls and theatres both of London and Paris, need not fear to follow in the wake of Mrs. Coral, who had just returned to America, and left a place on the platform in England vacant for any one on whom her mantle of inspiration might be found to fall.

At three o'clock, Signor Infuriori called, and was delighted to find Bertha at home and alone; though Lady Armadale was far too discreet and conventional a woman to allow him a two hours *tête-d-tête* with Bertha, alone in her boudoir. Lady Bun was always in the habit of dropping in, either to lunch or just after it, and to-day she was asked by Lady Armadale to keep Bertha and Signor Infuriori company during the afternoon, as Lady Armadale had to be out making calls.

Dear, good, kind Lady Bun! what a charming person she was to chaperon young ladies who wanted *tête-d-têtes* with *beaux*. She always commented upon the weather, and said a few kind words to the young gentleman about himself, his parents, his profession; in short, anything about himself with which it was no impertinence to meddle. Then taking up a book or paper, and selecting the coziest and softest chair in the warmest corner of the room, she held the book before her

eyes and soon was in the land of dreams, peacefully and profoundly oblivious of all that was going on around her in the world of physical realities.

Lady Bun was getting into years: she was not old, not much over fifty, but then she had never been a very strong woman, and she was up nearly every night till two or three a.m., so it is not to be wondered at, that as she was blessed with a quiet mind, a peaceful conscience and a most unsuspecting temper, she often slept quietly, when restless, nervous and suspecting women would have been worrying themselves into their graves, over the imagined peccadilloes and dangers of the maidens committed to their charge.

To say that any young lady would have been in perfect safety with the famous Italian singer, would be to assert far too much; but to say that Bertha was safe in his company was to assert a mere truism, for this exceptional young woman was one of the few girls in modern days, who never give a man the slightest encouragement to trespass upon proprieties. She was by nature as chaste as ice, as pure as marble, and she detested any approach to sensuality in thought, word or deed, as she would recoil from the sting of a viper or the embrace of an octopus.

It is a singular and yet a very beautiful fact in nature, that woman's influence over man is really stronger in many instances than man's over woman. Man, though claiming to be lord and master, is over and over again the slave of the "weaker vessel," and when that "weaker vessel" is filled with living water from the perennial spring of untainted virtue, how mighty is that vessel's power to slake man's thirst for pure enjoyment, and lead him to find pleasure of the highest type in the refining and ennobling companionship of a truly virtuous female. Woman must not content herself with being simply man's equal, legally and industrially. She must be in many senses his superior, and as the mother's influence is far more potent with the child than the father's ever can be, as man's part in child-bearing is microscopic compared with woman's, let all other mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters see to it, that they never descend, even in one particular, from that pedestal of purity upon which society is willing to place the female sex. Rather let them, by sure if slow degrees, lift weak, erring man nearer and nearer to their lofty though not inaccessible moral heights, and thus redeem society.

by being in very truth the apocalyptic woman, humanity's ideal, who, clothed in sunny sheen, symbolic of celestial virtue, adorned with diadem of twelve bright gems significant of rounded intellectual culture, tramples under foot the serpent and lightly steps upon the moon.

Figurative but glowing phraseology, easily comprehended by every Kabalist or Mystic, who if he know anything of Oriental lore or Swedenborgian correspondence, needs not to be told that the serpent is ever introduced into sacred literature, as the emblem of the carnal nature which needs to be utterly subjected to the mind and soul, while the moon, a child and satellite of planet earth, stands for temporal possessions and every earthly honour, which in the ideal commonwealth must needs be in complete subservience to the spiritual nature of mankind.

It is possible to confer great moral benefit, and at the same time be receiving great physical or mental assistance from the person whom you are spiritually blessing; yea, it is possible to get into such conditions of harmony, even here on earth, that two sick people can be cured by simply being brought together, two darkened minds illumined, two sinning ones reformed, because wherever there is harmony, sympathy and mutual good-will, there are the best means afforded for the reception and dissemination of all that contributes to the welfare of the race.

Signor Infuriori and Bertha were in many things congenial spirits. They admired the same music, the same pictures, the same articles of vertu, the same scenery, the same authors, up to a certain point; but in all intellectual tastes and capabilities, Bertha went far beyond the tenor, who saw more beauty in himself than in aught beside, though he was by no means blind to the loveliness of nature or of art.

Lady Armadale, returning at 4.45, found Lady Bun sound asleep by the fire in her favourite arm-chair, and Bertha and the Signor seated together on a handsome divan, discoursing upon the beauties of Italian lakes and skies.

Lady Armadale was almost beside herself with gratitude to the Italian, when she noticed how very much stronger Bertha's voice sounded, and how very much brighter and healthier she looked; and when she hinted to the tenor that he was the cause of the young lady's improved health and spirits, he at once decided that Lady Armadale was a goddess

and that he owed her life-long gratitude for her good opinion and kindly tribute to the effectiveness for good of his presence and influence upon the young lady, who had won so warm a place in Lady Armadale's capacious heart.

Not by any means a bashful or hesitating woman, or one in any way afflicted with prudishness or mock-modesty, her ladyship explained the principles of mesmerism briefly to the Signor, told him by what processes Bertha's brother had cured her whenever anything ailed her, and then having received her young friend's cordial consent to her proposal, she suggested that Signor Infuriori should try the effect of magnetic passes, made by him across Bertha's throat and chest and down her spinal column.

As she was attired in a dress of light merino, and had no silk about her person, it was quite unnecessary that she should remove even her outermost garment to render the treatment effective. Indeed Lady Armadale knew well enough that manipulation is often productive of far more powerful and lasting good when the patient is fully dressed than when partially disrobed, because the magnetic force conveyed to the patient by the magnetist, saturates the garments and inheres in the fabric to such an extent that the invalid's own dress becomes in a sense a battery, from which force can be collected and drawn into the system. For the same reason, it is highly desirable that whenever practicable, treatment should be given at the residence of, or in the room generally occupied by, a sufferer, rather than in a public office or a stranger's house, as magnetism can permeate the atmosphere, impregnate furniture, linen, flannel, paper, water, indeed anything which is not positively a non-conductor; so that in a vitalized apartment cures are effected by the gradual absorption into the system, of the vitality communicated to the air and objects in the room.

Another very important fact concerning healing must never be lost sight of, and that is, that no matter how powerful a healer any one may be, it is useless to work where one meets repulsion or causes it, as sympathy is the first and mightiest prerequisite in all works of healing,

After Signor Infuriori had made a few passes over Bertha, and held his hands, the one upon her throat, the other pressed against the nape of her neck for about five minutes, Bertha felt so much better that she was tempted to try her voice, and

she had not been able to sing a single note since parting with her brother.

Signor Infuriori led her to the piano, still keeping his left hand on her neck. At first her voice was very weak, but it gradually cleared and strengthened, till at length it had regained something of its original power and sweetness.

About twenty-five minutes having now been occupied in giving the treatment, Lady Armadale, who knew the injurious effects of continuing treatments for too long a time (and anything over half-an-hour is usually too long), recommended Signor Infuriori to desist from his operations for that day, at the same time thanking him effusively for doing their young friend so much good. She expressed the hope that the Signor would always know how welcome he would be at her house, when he chose to give them a call.

He being quite overjoyed at the success of his efforts, requested permission to call daily and follow up the treatments, till Bertha was quite restored to health. Lady Armadale gladly acceding to his wishes, and he faithfully doing his best to work the cure, and his efforts proving in every way successful, in about ten days Bertha was well enough to sing at a private concert in Lady Armadale's drawing-room, and her ladyship no longer felt fearful of the consequences of the impending lecture in St. Michael's Hall, which was to take place the first Sunday evening in November, and it was now nearing the end of October.

As some persons attach much importance to the *personel* of a healer, and we have not given any very detailed description of Signor Infuriori as yet, it may interest our readers to know that at that time he was just twenty-seven years of age, five feet eleven inches in height, weighed one hundred and seventy-six pounds exactly when divested of his outer garments, was broad-shouldered, had a magnificent chest and splendid pair of lungs, dark, flashing eyes, an abundance of wavy, raven hair, was fond of good company and good living, enjoyed excellent health, and was a singularly handsome and commanding fellow, and an unmistakable Italian.

It will be remembered that Bertha's brother was fair, with blue eyes and golden hair, and he was the most remarkable healer in all our experience we have ever met; but his size and strength were fully equal and indeed somewhat superior to Signor Infuriori's.

It appears that a fine, healthy *physique* is indispensable to a magnetic physician, who accomplishes much of his work by animal magnetism, but when the work performed is more distinctly a spiritual work, *physique* is quite subservient to mental, moral, and mediumistic qualifications.



## CHAPTER XXV.

## TRANCE SPEAKING AT ST. MICHAEL'S HALL.

ST. MICHAEL'S HALL is one of the largest and most fashionable of all the concert and lecture halls in the Metropolis. It is so situated as to be within easy reach of all the principal thoroughfares, and though not particularly celebrated for its architectural features or elaborate decorations, it is a thoroughly substantial John Bullish structure, designed for comfort and utility more than for display. It possesses a fine organ, and is capable of seating about 2,500 persons very conveniently; its advertised seating capacity we believe is 3,000, but we must always make some allowance for the exaggerations of advertisers, who are terribly apt to speak as though standing and seating capacity were synonymous.

London had been well placarded, sandwich-men and donkeys had been freely employed in giving publicity to the fact of Bertha's entrance upon her lecturing career.

When on the lyric stage she had been known as Signorina Vulpi, her brother being Signor Vulpi; but as she was now to appear not as an actress but as an inspired teacher of religious truth, Lady Armadale and other friends warmly seconded the proposition made by her spirit guides, that the *nom de plume* should be dropped, and she should come out under her own name. This fact prevented many persons from identifying Bertha with the celebrated Signorina Vulpi, whose vocal abilities were of such unquestioned excellence.

Notwithstanding the fact that the name, Miss Bertha Thrushleigh, was comparatively unknown to the London public, the advertisements sufficed to draw together an audience of over 1,500 people. The *Lion and Dragon* declared in its report of the following morning, that nearly 2,000 were present, though the *Cockroach* and the *Stinging-Adder* endeavoured to cast all kinds of slurs upon the speaker and the audience, for fear lest they should lose the ecclesiastical support which alone kept them from bankruptcy, should they show any countenance to so heretical a movement as Modern Spiritualism.

The placards posted upon all the most conspicuous bill stations in London and the suburban districts, and which cost over £40, besides expense of posting, read as follows:—

**SPIRITUALISM.**—Miss Bertha Thrushleigh, the young and eloquent Trance Medium (only nineteen years of age), will Lecture in St. Michael's Hall, Sunday evening, November 4, 187-, on any Scientific, Philosophical or Religious topic which may be selected by vote of the audience. Relevant Questions are invited after the Discourse. An original Poem will also be delivered on a subject selected in a similar manner. Doors open at 6.30. Organ Voluntary at 7 o'clock. Admission free; reserved seats, 2s. and 1s.; to be obtained at Crabtree's, Regent Street, or at the Institute of Psychology, Bed Lion Square. Professor Hermes McBen-Nevis will preside."

At the appointed hour precisely Mr. Godfrey Fitzgerald, an organist of great ability, played Mendelssohn's "Wedding March," on the grand organ, as Bertha, escorted by the Professor, Ladies Armadale and Bun, and several other distinguished members of the nobility and gentry, made her way to the seat set apart for her on the platform, immediately behind a stand of choice exotics, which made sweet the air, and added immensely to the appearance of the hall.

Bertha was dressed all in white, with lilies of the valley at her throat and in her hair. Very frail she looked; after her recent illness, and very interesting; as after a few remarks from Professor McBen-Nevis, and a selection from Mozart's "Twelfth Mass," played finely on the organ, she rose to deliver a soul-stirring invocation. Her voice was not loud; but it was sufficiently penetrative in quality to pierce to the upper gallery at the extreme end of the spacious hall.

The invocation—so unlike the stereotyped prayers which church-goers so often hear gabbled as though there were no living Deity to pray to; and prayer were a mere form, an empty ceremony—produced such an impression, that many who had come to scoff remained to inquire diligently into the strange new philosophy, of which the mysterious young lady on the platform was so dignified and effective an exponent.

Following the invocation came the choice of subject for the oration. Nearly fifty subjects were handed in, and it

took fully half-an-hour to decide which had received the majority of votes by show of hands. After rather a sharp contest, the choice fell upon "Buddhism and Brahmanism: the origin, progress and destiny of these religious systems, and the moral influences they are calculated to exert upon society, with some illustrations of the points of resemblance and difference between them and Christianity."

Such a subject would have puzzled the greatest scholar of the age, were he asked to declaim off-hand at a moment's notice a lengthy and finished oration upon so abstruse and unusual a topic of discourse; and where is the girl of nineteen who, without any scholastic or special training, is capable of speaking not only fluently and grammatically but eloquently, pointedly upon such a theme.

The speech was a master-piece from beginning to end. It was beyond criticism. No one either in this world or any other, could possibly have delivered it were he not fully acquainted with the subtleties of Oriental thought, and quite conversant with the very involved history of Asiatic theology.

When, in a glowing peroration, the lecture ended with a summing up of the principles of all true religion, and such an exposition of the Golden Rule as few had ever heard or dreamed of, the large audience was completely carried away. You might have heard the proverbial pin drop, had it fallen at any moment in any part of the room during the hour and five minutes which the lecture occupied; and when at the close of that time the speaker paused, and Professor McBen-Nevis told the audience they might ask questions bearing upon the subject, if they so desired, only two were propounded, and those were prefaced with eulogistic praise of the masterly treat which had just been given.

The organ played another selection of glorious sacred music, and then came the choice of subjects for the poem. After considerable debate as to which out of the forty handed in had really received the greatest show of hands in its favour, the lot fell on "The New Utopia."

As the poem was taken down on the spot by a competent stenographer, and we have a *verbatim* report in our possession, deeming it a literary as well as a moral gem, we insert it here for the edification and delectation of our readers.

## THE NEW UTOPIA.

The prophet bards of every age  
 Have sung in many a hallowed clime,  
 Of some more glorious age to be,  
 Which in God's own appointed time  
 Shall prove to all the waiting earth,  
 That love for ever will endure,  
 That truth for aye will conqueror be,  
 And reign on stable throne secure.

Your records tell you long ago,  
 When first appeared th' Adamic race,  
 That Eve, by serpent tempted, fell  
 From man's first royal resting place ;  
 That Adam yielding to her lure,  
 Fell also from his high estate,  
 Thus forfeiting their paradise,  
 They're cast outside fair Eden's gate.

Not only doth the Pentateuch  
 Proclaim the direful fall of man,  
 The Shastras, Zendavesta, teach  
 The same, and should your eyelids scan  
 The pages of all ancient lore,  
 The self-same teaching ye would find,  
 But promise of Deliverer,  
 The fall is never far behind.

How came the human soul to fall  
 From its primeval innocence ?  
 How comes it that the spirit yields  
 Unto the baser charms of sense ?  
 How comes the serpent in the field ?  
 What is forbidden fruit ? you'll say ;  
 And why did God, the Eternal, place  
 His children in temptation's way ?

It may be that the human mind,  
 Embedded here in mortal clay,  
 May not be able to explain  
 The mystery of God's perfect way ;

But angel-souls in light who dwell,  
 Beyond the bounds of sense and time,  
 Have found an explanation full,  
 Acknowledged in life's fairer clime.

The old Utopia, said by Greeks  
 To have existed far away,  
 Far back in ages of the past,  
 Prophetic is of coming day ;  
 And if historic truth ye find,  
 Concealed beneath those legends old,  
 That truth is but a prophecy  
 Of the yet future age of gold.

Arcadia, Hesperides,  
 Parnassus or Olympus' heights,  
 Elysian Fields, gardens of gods,  
 Where spirits take unfettered flights  
 Among the stars, beyond the belt  
 Of old Orion, hoar with age,  
 Among the sweet-voiced Pleiades,  
 On which with rapture oft ye gaze,—  
 Are all but terms, by man employed,  
 To shadow forth the coming day.  
 When none beyond the pale of night  
 Shall in sin's devious pathway stray.

The nations of the olden world,  
 In form, have crumbled into dust:  
 Where are the ancient dynasties,  
 The ancient treasures, wherein trust  
 The sages of the years gone by ?  
 They've perished 'neath the sweep of time,  
 Saturn devours them by his breath,  
 They pass into the unknown clime.

But though no monarchies abide,  
 Perpetuating Eastern rule,  
 E'en though the libraries in flame  
 Can teach no more in ancient school,  
 The spirit of religion lives;  
 Science, philosophy, abide,  
 And prophecy, with glowing torch,  
 Is ever at man's anxious side.

Think ye the nations long laid waste,—  
 Assyria and Babylon,  
 Chaldea and Persia,—have held sway  
 O'er souls who had life's triumph won ?  
 Or think ye that the seers of old,  
 Or even the Avatars bright,  
 Have given the whole of truth to earth ?  
 No ! mortals could not bear its sight.

If Plato of Atlantis spoke,  
 As Solon taught in days of yore;  
 In the Republic Grecian thought  
 Would Sociology explore ;  
 Plato's ideal would fairer be,  
 If all the weak, deformed he found  
 Were not destroyed but raised to life,  
 More glorious, on some hallowed ground.

Unfallen purity ye'll find  
 Is chronicled by seers of old,  
 But not the splendour of the earth,  
 In all its wonders manifold.  
 This for this planet is not past,  
 But future, and your souls shall see,  
 When eyes of flesh have long been dust.  
 The perfect dawn of liberty.

Sing Hallelujah ! waiting earth !  
 Adorn thyself an angel's bride ;  
 Thy bridegroom draweth near to thee,  
 He stands thy consort at thy side.  
 Yet thou shalt know meridian bliss,  
 The zenith of thy triumph see,  
 And, as a rounded golden sphere,  
 Move round the sun in majesty.

The Arctic and Antarctic seas  
 Shall yet yield up resources vast,  
 The ocean shall unbosom isles  
 And continents, which in the past  
 Were peopled by uncounted throngs,  
 Of those who passed beyond earth's sphere,  
 They now on other planets dwell,  
 Beyond this earth-bound atmosphere.

Work! brave reformers, nobly toil,  
 Not so far distant is the day,  
 When poverty and shame and sin  
 Shall from this earth-life pass away.  
 The New Utopia will come,  
 When every nation shall agree,  
 And be, where'er all peoples dwell,  
 In the sweet joys of amity.

The law of love must be enforced;  
 Wars of ambition done away;  
 And standing armies thrust aside;  
 Your Queen must be Fraternity :  
 While Liberty, Equality,  
 As kindred angels near her dwell ;  
 Let these be grafted in your lives,  
 And Heaven destroys all shade of Hell.

Perhaps the critical reviewer may pass unfavourable comments upon the style and substance of this choice excerpt from the treasury of inspired lays, we have carefully preserved for publication as a demand for them arises. Perhaps some one who could not write a line of poetry to save his life, unable to appreciate the sentiment of these inspired lines, may even insult all taste and intellect by pronouncing them doggerel; but we are convinced that no candid and dispassionate reader will rise from the perusal of these remarkable verses, without seeing in them a moral excellence and also a literary ability, entitling them to rank before many highly-paid and studied effusions which are applauded to the echo, only because they are the compositions of some man or woman, before whose shrine it is "the thing" to unquestioningly bow.

Of one fact we have been thoroughly convinced, through a long series of years, and that is, that with all the desire on the part of many to explode what they term the fallacy of all claims to inspiration, made on behalf of our trance and inspirational lecturers and poets, they never dare even to attempt to duplicate the intellectual feats performed nightly by the many highly-gifted instruments of the spirit-world, who in all parts of the civilized earth are drawing around them an ever-increasingly large and influential crowd of listeners and admirers.

Conjurors perform a few paltry tricks of legerdemain;

Fishcock and Cucumber, and other noodles who perform under the "moral support" of distinguished names, may duplicate; if they will, a little of the most external part of the machinery employed by invisibles in their intercourse with mankind, but where is the "exposer" who dares even to attempt an exposure of the intellectual phenomena, or a duplication of the evidences of immortality so positively conveyed through the intermediation of psychic agency.

This very remarkable, and in every way successful, meeting was only the beginning of a long series of similar gatherings, in each of which Bertha shone brilliantly in the eyes of the *élite* of London. Mrs. Sweetgeese hated Spiritualism and all its appurtenances. She called it "from the devil," but Lady Armadale was too much for her, and as Bertha soon went back to Silvern Terrace, and helped her in her domestic management, though not so laboriously as of yore, she was forced into unwilling submission to Bertha's entrance upon a public lecturing career, destined to be a long and very useful one.

As Mr. Howard Bruin, who had by this time discarded the title of rev., was still an earnest inquirer and very far convinced of the truths of spirit-return, he very kindly offered to preside one week-day evening, and make some opening remarks, introductory to Miss Thrushleigh's lecture.

On the evening in question, a large delegation from Parade Street Chapel old congregation was present at St. Michael's Hall.

Mr. Bruin was now conducting Sunday services at a theatre, where he drew immense audiences of working men, besides a large representation of his former congregation. He preached twice and lectured once every Sunday, and so able were his lectures on the great reforms of the day, that many a speech in the House of Commons owed much of its pithiness and power to the perusal of the printed lecture, by certain advanced members of the House, who desired the creation of a new and purer party in politics than any now existing.

Mr. Bruin being so well-known a man, and one so highly respected by every one who really knew him, it was thought only right to leave the subject of discourse in his hands, on the evening of his presidency.

After speaking very beautifully on the moral excellence of

the teachings of Spiritualism, when properly understood and rightfully applied, he said : " I shall now ask the intelligences who inspire our fair lectress, to deal with the knotty problem —' Capital *versus* Labour.' "

For seventy-five or eighty minutes a stream of unbroken eloquence fell from Bertha's lips. Not a slip of the tongue, not a reiteration which could have been dispensed with except at the sacrifice of clearness, not a harsh invective or unreasoning expression of prejudice or contempt for any class, or individual, or opinion marred the beauty of the " feast of reason and flow of soul," with which nearly 2,000 people were rapturously enamoured.

The papers which valued any kind of reputation for truthfulness, could but endorse the main arguments of the lecture, in their reports the following day. None but ultra conservatives and rabid Fenians could find fault with the true conservatism, enlightened and moderate liberalism, and thorough-going radicalism, which were blended as a trinity in unity in that memorable speech, which in years to come will doubtless be read and appreciated by the thousands who honour a prophet after his earthly dissolution, though they may scoff at his words while he dwells in bodily presence among them.

That lecture settled Mr. Bruin's somewhat wavering mind, and led him to seek counsel of Bertha's guides, with a view to determining his future scene of labours. He was still under thirty, and unmarried, a sister, not over twenty-five, also unmarried, kept house for him ; and he and she had serious thoughts of going across the water, but not immediately. Knowing that in a year-and-a-half Bertha would be twenty-one, and out from under the control of Mrs. Sweetgeese, once for all, the thought struck these worthy people, that they and Bertha might take the journey to America together, the next summer but one.

Bertha's controls having expressed their desire, that she should go on a tour through England before leaving her native land for climes remote, the suggestions of the Bruins seemed to fit in nicely with the intentions and wishes of the spirits ; so when Mr. Bruin and his sister had the interview with the invisibles, they craved through Bertha's organism, it was arranged that after three months more in London, Bertha should go to Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds, Cardiff, and hosts of other places, and then

in the summer after the next, sail for New York or Boston, with her kind friends the Bruins.

We might, had we space and time, dilate lengthily and instructively on Bertha's eighteen months' experiences in England. She often had to rough it, often came in contact with coarse and vulgar minds, but more often she was cheered and blest with the appreciating love of earnest seekers after truth. Anyone who has laboured long in England knows, that though there is much of prejudice and bigotry yet to overcome, still the minds of multitudes are being opened to the reception of spiritual truth.

Bertha's eloquence never deserted her, though sometimes her health was anything but good. But ill or well, she was always sustained by her inspirers. The record of her arduous work is now a part of history, and needs not to be recounted here.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

## GENUINE PHILANTHROPY.

OUR readers will remember, that early in our story we introduced to their notice a very august individual, in the person of the haughty Bishop of Heliopolis. It will also be remembered, that this worthy man was so strangely affected by the singing of Bertha and the Unseen, in Knatesbrook Church, that instead of preaching against the Jews and exposing the horrible nature of the crimes with which this persecuted and unoffending race are so frequently charged by Christians, he resolved then and there to found an orphanage at his See in the far East, and there commence practical philanthropic labour among the thousands of uninstructed Arab children, who could not comprehend the subtleties of Christian metaphysics, but who did know how to show both gratitude and appreciation for the substantial good things of this world, even when administered to them along with sound practical instruction in reading, writing, spelling, and cleanliness.

The good bishop set to work as soon as he got home, and commenced in right good earnest to gather together a few hundreds of the starving, almost naked, little creatures who dogged his footsteps at every turn. He earnestly hoped and fervently prayed that a cathedral might soon be erected on the site of the humble chapel, called, by way of compliment, the "pro-cathedral," where he officiated, till funds could be obtained for raising a suitable temple in accordance with his wishes; but this work of philanthropy was surely one of the best means for opening the hearts of the people, and leading them by degrees to embrace Christianity.

We often hear the Jesuits roundly abused, and perhaps not without cause in some instances; but whatever we may think of them morally, we can but admire their diplomacy: they are such excellent diplomatists, they do not overlook the physical while they seek to provide for the spiritual wants of mankind. In one sense they certainly are followers of Jesus, for we are told that he performed miracles to supply starving

multitudes with bread and fish, when they were hungry, knowing that the needs of the body must be met ere the spirit will attend to the appeals made to it.

When will our missionaries everywhere see to it, that stomachs are fed as well as brains? When will our agitators for an improved system of education, take care that the children whose heads they seek to cram, do not go breakfastless and dinnerless to school? Insanity, not culture, will result from overtaxing the mind when the body is not properly nourished, while to expect to convert the masses to morality, when they live in filthy dens with only district visitors' tracts to eat and wear, is a manifest absurdity.

That religion is a monstrosity which refuses to take man as he is, and gradually lift him to a higher plane of being, by stretching out the hand and rope, until it reaches the waters in which he is sinking; and whatever may be said against their ritualism, by those who dislike an ornate service in the Church of England, such men as Mr. Mark O'Neeky, of St. Alabama's, are surely entitled to our sincerest respect, as practical and self-denying workers among the outcast and distressed.

Bertha was at the Bruins' taking tea one afternoon, when she chanced to take up a stray pamphlet which she found lying on a side table in the sitting-room where tea was about to be served.

Miss Bruin was in the kitchen toasting tea-cakes, for though a lady by birth and breeding, she could never have thought herself ladylike, had she passed her time in idleness, and treated her servants as though they were curs—we will not use the common expression, dogs, as so many distinguished members of the canine species ride out every afternoon at the most fashionable hours, not only in the carriage with their mistress, but also on her knees.

Miss Bruin never changed a servant, unless one were taken ill and had to go home, or one were married from her house; and during the seven years she had kept house for her brother, she had had only three servants: one left through illness, one to be married, the third, who had been with her nearly three years, was so devotedly attached to her, that she declared whenever the Bruins went to America she should go too, even were she obliged to pay her own passage and got no wages when she landed across the sea.

Bad servants are often the echo of bad masters and mistresses, and the servant difficulty, from a rational standpoint, is no greater than the master and mistress difficulty. It is quite as difficult for servants to obtain good places as for employers to find good servants; goodness on the one hand will always call it out on the other, and *vice versa*.

Miss Bruin's servant was never rude or familiar; she was always deferential and obedient. She received £18 a-year, but she earned it; and Miss Bruin's presence in the kitchen toasting tea-cakes, instead of degrading the lady in the eyes of the domestic, refined and educated the less-informed woman, who looked up to her superior because she was superior in knowledge, not merely in earthly station.

But while we have been discussing the servant problem, and Miss Bruin has been preparing the tea, what has Bertha been about? What has interested her so much in the statistical information contained in the pamphlet, whose contents she is devouring with such eager eyes?

A glance at the title-page will let us into the secret, and explain the fascination of the dates and figures for Bertha; it reads as follows:—

"First Annual Report of the Children's Home, founded at Heliopolis, July 7th, 187—, by his grace the Right Rev. Bishop of the Diocese. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me'; 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

The succeeding pages of the Report go on to explain how his grace, the Lord Bishop, was moved when at Knaresbrook, by the sweet singing of the virgin choir, to found this Home, and how the offertory, amounting to £563 14s. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., had been appropriated to this benevolent work, which under God had borne such excellent fruits, and had so well rewarded the labourers for their toil.

The Report then went on to describe the nature and scope of the work undertaken. In the first place, a plot of ground had been purchased at a merely nominal cost from the Government, and upon this well-chosen site, a long, low building had been erected at a minimum cost, as nothing had been wasted in useless ornamentation, and builder's contracts had not been entertained for an instant. Friends who under-

stood building, one of whom was an architect, had managed the undertaking between them, and the lawyers, who usually come in for a lion's share of profits, had not received a penny. The only solicitor who had been employed was a friend of the Bishop's, and had rendered his assistance gladly without hope of a pecuniary recompense. The workmen had all been men who were suffering from the hardness of the times and the scarcity of employment; these had received moderate pay for their work: they were paid according to what they really did. The overseers were men of sense and kindness, and the work prospered so rapidly that only six months elapsed between the laying of the corner stone and the opening and dedication of the building.

Here followed a lengthy account of the dedication ceremonies, and an elaborate description of the Chapel in the centre of the Home, where the eucharist and evening prayers were said daily. Next in order came a description of the building itself, which was of red brick, two stories high. The lower story contained a school-room, dining-room, kitchen, pantry, laundry, library, two spacious sitting-rooms, and private rooms for committee-men and other officials. A very large play-ground, a kitchen-garden, a flower-garden, a drying-ground, and all necessary offices were provided in abundance. Up stairs there were dormitories; each person and child had a separate room. There were a hundred and fifty little rooms, each one kept scrupulously neat and clean. At each end of the corridors there were large bath-rooms and spacious lavatories, divided up in a great many sections that all might enjoy as much privacy as possible. The reading-rooms were well supplied with books and periodicals, and were thrown open to all respectable people who sought admittance, while the school-room was used as a lecture and concert hall as well, and many were the jolly entertainments given there during the Christmas holidays.

Some of our readers may laugh at the idea of Arab children living in such comparative grandeur, in a building so like a hotel, where high prices are charged for the accommodation of fairly well-off adults; but two things must be borne in mind: first, that in all the British dependencies there are many English-speaking people whose children are sadly neglected, unless provided for in some such way as this; and then, that the opinions usually formed of Arab children

are quite erroneous, as whenever they have the advantages of a good education offered to them, they seize knowledge with astonishing avidity, and often go far beyond their British companions in skill and adroitness.

The idea that other races than the Anglo-Saxon are necessarily inferior, is all moonshine : it is simply the result of the detestable conceit of white-skins, who put colour before everything else, and who vainly imagine that they are God's special favourites, endowed with powers of mind denied to all besides.

The children of Heliopolis, both native and British-born, were easily improved and cultured when under kind but strict discipline. The Bishop was a strict disciplinarian : and his colleagues in this respect were like him ; but many of his assistants were tender-hearted, motherless children themselves, young women scarcely twenty years of age, who were the best possible persons to take charge of the smaller children, by whom they were soon respected and beloved.

This very interesting and suggestive document had not yet met the eyes of Mr. Bruin, as the letter-carrier had left it at the door after he had gone out to call upon two or three parties, whose assistance he needed in carrying out the services he was then conducting at Islington, on Wednesday evenings.

Scarcely had Miss Bruin seated herself at the tea-table, when her brother came in looking the picture of health and kindness, and no sooner had he greeted Bertha in his hearty, whole-souled manner, than she drew his attention to the tract she had just been reading.

Mr. Bruin entered at once, heart and soul, into Bertha's proposition, that they should commence without delay to circulate notices among their friends, that they intended starting a Home for Orphan Children, not in London where the climate was not sufficiently salubrious, but in a charming little spot in Buckinghamshire, where Mr. Bruin had an uncle who was a retired farmer, and had long since ceased to need the income he derived from the rental of the farm-house, and the garden-ground immediately adjacent.

As luck would have it, this uncle had just written to his nephew, informing him that he was willing to devote this property to any really-deserving charity, and if he only knew that his gift would be improved for the good of humanity, he should have the greatest pleasure in forfeiting £50 a-year,

which he could well spare, as he had £800 coming in regularly without it.

Mr. Bruin, Senior, was a radical both in religion and politics, and never strove to impede the progress of the younger man's revolutionary schemes, which were every one of them sound, philanthropic, and temperate. Mr. Bruin never could be a red-hot partisan, nor a one-sided advocate of any movement. His mind possessed the happy faculty of going round about a subject, and viewing it from all sides; and never till he had fully satisfied himself a principle was worthy of espousal, did he say anything in its favour. He also had the good judgment to remain silent upon matters concerning which he knew nothing, and as he really knew a great deal about a great many things, he was wise enough not to wish to make people think he knew everything.

In one of his latest Sunday evening sermons, he had referred to the persecutions to which the Rev. Mark O'Neeky had been subjected, and in it he had given vent to expressions something like the following:—

"Any man who illustrates in his life the Jacobean axiom, that the visitation of the fatherless and the widows by whom he is surrounded, constitutes an essential element of religion in its native purity, is not far from the kingdom of God, a kingdom of which I cannot conceive, unless I place it in some world where it is possible for kindly spirits to bring about the reign of unclouded righteousness, through the efforts of the more fortunate, on behalf of the less happily circumstanced, till at length we have evolved a true and enduring Utopia."

Just at this time Miss Cornwallis Rhineloch, an intimate friend of Royalty, was agitating for the erection at Bethnal Green of a home where poor children should be clothed, housed, fed, and educated, and for which laudable end she wrote and published many fascinating works on travel.

Miss Rhineloch was quite a young lady, very highly educated, peculiarly winning in manners, and positively beautiful in personal appearance. The previous Christmas she had gotten up a Children's treat and Christmas tree, when 3,000 fancy articles had been sent in; but she had exchanged them all for warm socks, flannel petticoats, useful dresses, and sundry other items much needed in the wardrobe of the poor. The event had been so great, so perfect a success, that the charitable lady had decided upon taking instant

steps towards the founding of a permanent home for desolate little ones.

With a view to interesting the public in her enterprise, she had proposed giving a concert, at which many eminent vocalists had promised their services, while royal patronage was not lacking to give the affair that prestige which carries such weight with English people. It is not talent alone that draws in London : it is talent patronized by the nobility, that crowds the halls and brings the money in. Miss Rhineloch knew this well, so did Mr. Bruin, and to whom could they all appeal with more certainty of winning a gracious response, than to the ever-kind and gracious Lady Armadale.

How all these good people would have got on without her, is beyond us to imagine. She and Dr. Kneeswell were still on terms of friendly recognition, so immediately the concert plan was broached to her, she wrote to the eminent *Mus. Doc.*, who promised not only his patronage but went so far as to say that he would officiate as conductor-in-chief, while his niece, Miss Clavering, would play all the accompaniments, and thoroughly drill the children who were to form the chorus.

Signor Infuriori and Madame Assoretta had both offered their services ; so with Bertha's aid the concert would surely be a great success. It was arranged to take place on a Monday evening, in a large Co-operative Hall, in the neighbourhood of Bethnal Green.

As it was in every way desirable to let the children display their talent, in the district where it was so necessary to introduce the refining effects of music and the arts, Madame Assoretta fumed and fretted, and threatened to have her name erased from the programme, when she learned on what stage she was to stand ; but when she heard on reliable authority that Prince Gottheim Rowdamowski had engaged seven of the chairs immediately facing the stage, she relented and took as active a share as any in making the necessary arrangements.

She attended all the rehearsals, and agreed to sing two duets as well as two solos : one with Bertha and one with Signor Dominico, a very fine barytone whose voice charded well with her own. Madame Christiani was also to be present, and the mere mention of her name was enough to empty Belgravia into the stalls of any hall or theatre in London.

Madame Christiani was by birth a Swede, connected by marriage with the King of Sweden. She had travelled all over Germany and Italy, spoke nine languages fluently, and was one of the most highly-gifted women of the day.

With such a quintet of soloists, besides the children, no wonder the hall was crammed to suffocation. The programme was a very novel one. Dr. Kneesswell played a splendid selection from "Lohengrin," on the overstrung extra-grand piano, lent by the firm of Cackleton and Thrumm specially for the occasion. Then Bertha appeared in simplest robe of white, to sing "The Bailiff's daughter of Islington." She was followed by Signor Infuriori, who sang his greatest triumph, *Cujus animam*. Then came a little girl in a blue cotton pinafore, followed by twenty or more young companions, who sang "Three blind mice," and "Polly put the kettle on." Next appeared Madame Assoretta, who poured forth an Italian cavatina in her most melodious and powerful style. Signor Dominico sang "The Bridge." The children sang two pretty hymns very nicely, and then the great Christiani, in a plain brown dress, not much grander than the simple frocks worn by the children, sang "She wore a wreath of roses." That song was the event of the evening. Though only a simple ballad it touched every heart, and caused many sovereigns to find their way into the coffers of the charity, as gaily dressed ladies and gentlemen left the hall at eleven o'clock to enter their carriages, and feast upon the sumptuous repasts in readiness for them at their homes, while all the children were made happy with buns, milk, and oranges, served by Miss Rhineloch immediately the audience had dispersed.

The proceeds of the evening netted £250, and this substantial sum was made up to £300 by Ladies Armadale and Bun, and a few of their most intimate acquaintances, with the welcome donation of £10 from the Prince, who was delighted with all he saw and heard.

It may be imagined with what painstaking persistency it was necessary to train these untutored children before they could sing at a public concert, but the children of the poor are often gifted with very beautiful natural voices, so that with a little practise they can be made to sing by ear very nicely. Miss Rhineloch, Madame Christiani, Dr. Kneesswell, and Bertha had all given much of their valuable time and

energy to fitting the children for thus acquitting themselves most creditably, before a large and cultured audience.

Vulgar people are usually far more exacting in their demands than those of real attainment, and it is far easier to sing before a refined audience than an uncultured one, if the singer appeals in any sense to the innate refinement of the auditors. Bertha's voice, though not what it was before her illness, was still rich and powerful, and when she led the children in two German chorales (the music by a German composer, the words sung were English), the effect was thrilling.

This concert was very favourably commented upon by almost every London newspaper. Bertha gave a poem under spirit-influence towards the close; this the papers did not attempt to sneer at, but they styled it a very pleasing and appropriate "recitation."

Mr. Bruin's Eclectic Religious Congregation, to which he now ministered, subscribed £200 amongst them, and he gave £50 himself, and with this £550 the work in Buckinghamshire was commenced in right good earnest.

Mr. Bruin's farm was situated in a village called Prayer-haven, about twenty miles from the county town of Bucks. The land covered about thirty acres, and was in every way admirably fitted for a children's home. The old farm-house contained sixteen good rooms; some of them were very large, and all were comfortable, light and airy. The grounds adjoining the house and belonging to it, afforded just the space that was wanted for a good garden, and as there were many vegetables and some fruit trees already planted and thriving, besides four cows which Mr. Bruin allowed to remain without any charge to the Home, to furnish milk for the establishment, it was not long before Mrs. Ezekiel Jones and Mrs. Hezekiah Samuelson took up their abode as care-takers and matrons, their respective husbands having both passed into the immortal world, and they being both childless widows, the position was one for which they were well qualified, and they filled it admirably, as the testimony of all who know the Home and the good being done in it will amply prove.

The Heliopolitan arrangements, of course, could not all be carried out here. The orphanage over there was thoroughly self-supporting, and on a very large scale; but then it was

supported by the Church, and received a large annual allowance from the Government. In Prayerhaven it was impossible to think of taking in one hundred and forty children, and there were that number of inmates already at Heliopolis, and arrangements were being made for the accommodation of still more.

After a careful survey of the rooms, Messrs. Bruin, Miss Bruin, and Bertha, who went to Bucks on purpose to inspect the premises and superintend preliminary arrangements, decided that forty children could be taken in at once, and that then if the work progressed as they had reason to believe it would, it would be time enough to talk about erecting additional premises and doubling or trebling the number of children.

As girls are far more dependent upon home than boys in the present state of society, when a boy gets employment and remuneration often because he is a boy, while the atrocious recognition of sex in industry causes many girls to be destitute, even when employed, as their toil is so shamefully underpaid, it was considered best in the wisdom of the projectors to invite only female orphans to the house, until such time as ample room could be provided, then a home for boys was to be established adjoining that for girls.

In the home for girls there were ten dormitories, with four beds in each. The other six rooms were used as kitchen, dining-room, school-room, laundry, private sitting-room, and library respectively.

One of Mr. Bruin's first acts was to go to every bookseller with whom he was acquainted, and solicit good unsectarian reading matter for the shelves of this library. He collected by this means 407 excellent books. He took 123 from his own store, Madame Christiani gave 50, Lady Armadale 50, Lady Bun 50, Miss Rhineloch 100, and so on, till 1,000 volumes found their way there by the opening day.

The forty girls were all orphans and children of respectable but poor parents. Every child was to learn a trade. All the work was to be done by the inmates, and the girls were to be assisted professionally in none of their industries, though any kind friends who were willing to lend a helping hand, always found their services most heartily welcomed and fully appreciated.

The two good ladies who were placed in charge, were

neither impecunious nor wealthy. They would accept no salaries, and unflaggingly they worked from morning till night.

At first some of the children were untractable, and occasioned much anxiety on account of their resolute defiance of the wise and merciful laws framed for the guidance of the Home, but as the two eldest girls were seventeen and sixteen years of age respectively, while the youngest child was only three, these elder children being good, honest, hard-working girls, greatly assisted in teaching the younger ones and superintending the work.

The expenses were not heavy, and after two years the Report announced that the Home had doubled in size, and was completely self-supporting.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

## A HAPPY FAMILY.

IN the rude and hurried outline which was all that space allowed us to give of two most exemplary institutions, the one far off across the seas, the other in a pretty midland English county, we endeavoured to draw the attention of our readers to what is in our judgment, the only radical and truly effective method of solving the great and perplexing social problems of our times.

Indiscriminate almsgiving is not charity : this is admitted on every hand, though there are cases where immediate relief is a pressing necessity, and there are street beggars who really deserve every copper which is thrown to them, and make a good use of it.

Mr. Howard Bruin in his self-imposed work of visiting the poor in their own dwellings, found many a little match-seller and flower-girl, many a barefooted shoe-black, and many members of the tramp fraternity, not only honest but saintly and heroic. Many were the biting blows he gave in his discourses, to those who while praying to be kept out of temptation themselves, deliberately led others into it, and while praying for daily bread not for "me" but for "us," wilfully withheld that bread from starving creatures all around them, while they themselves had so much they threw the surplus on the dust-heap.

The Mount St. Michaels and the leading deacons, who were also trustees of Parade Street Chapel, Colonel Shark and Captain Smallsoul, pretended that they thrust Mr. Bruin out of their society because he was not orthodox in his theology, but if the truth were known it would be discovered that a course of sermons on the Lord's Prayer led to his expulsion.

These sermons were in no sense doctrinal. They kept entirely aloof from theological controversy. The most inveterate heresy-hunter could scarcely have found an unorthodox word in them, but they dealt unsparingly with the cant and hypocrisy and mock charity of our times.

Mr. Bruin made too much of the plural number in the Lord's Prayer. He sank the "me" completely in the "us," and for doing so he was styled a heretic, a Communist, a Socialist, and a Fenian. Then the author of that prayer, whether Hillel or Jesus, must have been all four of these very dreadful things. But while that reform in Judaism which gave birth to primitive Christianity, was no doubt a social and political as well as religious reform, while no one can attentively read the Acts and the Epistles without discovering many indications that first-century Christianity was Communism and Socialism, still we must ever keep before us a higher Communism, a purer Socialism than that of the spurious and aggressive type which threatens us with dynamite if we will not yield all our ancestral privileges without resistance. This Communism, which appeals most forcibly to every just and noble-minded person, only asks that no land and no talent may be allowed to lie idle, rusting away at the expense of those who suffer because it is not used.

In Mr. Bruin's plan every child was to be taught a trade, or educated to follow a profession. Every uneducated child upon the streets, was not only to be educated but fed and clothed at the expense of the nation. Not only was education to be offered free to all, but an industrial home be provided for all, and when he had occasion to dwell upon crime and pauperism, he declared as his unshaken and ever-strengthening conviction, that the money we spend in unreal charity and in the keeping up of punitive institutions, if expended properly on a Home system of education, would in a year so materially reduce the crime and misery of the country, that the reformative idea would soon be regarded as self-evidently correct.

This good and active man was a Co-operativist. He repudiated the title Socialist or Communist, because he preferred Co-operativist, and considered it more thoroughly expressive of the positions he really took.

He took this view of property, that if land were the *property* of any one who first discovered it, and it became naturally deeded to the man who made it fruitful by the infusion of his own energy into the soil, no one could by right lay claim to anything as exclusively his own. He would allow any one to possess and use whatever he employed for the general good, but land lying fallow should be claimed

by the Government for the people; unless the claimant was willing so to make use of it that he would find it impossible to enrich himself without at the same time enriching others.

All dog-in-the-manger policy was execrable in the eyes of Mr. Bruin. Idleness he regarded as the prolific mother of all abominations, and so convinced was he that idleness and immorality were never long disassociated, that he never hesitated to attribute ninety-nine per cent. of the evils connected with our civilization to the idleness of some one. He believed in work as the philosopher's stone and *elixir vitae*. He prescribed it on every occasion for everybody, and even when he saw people oppressed with too much work, his faith in work was not for an instant shaken, as he very logically argued that no one would have too much to do if somebody didn't do too little or none at all.

He believed in the sacredness of scavenging, as much as in the sanctity of literary or any other polite and gentlemanly occupation. He treated a shoe-black and a laundress quite as well as he treated a banker and a singer. He knew no distinction between work and work; he only drew the line between necessary and unnecessary occupation; but in his catalogue of necessaries he placed a great many things which many persons consider frivolities or luxuries. He did not include white chokers, swallow-tail coats, white kid gloves, or eau de Cologne among necessaries. Those and many other similar "elegancies" of the wardrobe and toilet he never felt the need of himself, and they annoyed rather than pleased him when he saw them displayed on the persons of others. But a good bath-room in every house, and a garden attached to the dwelling, or at least a spacious yard even in the most crowded parts of our great cities, pretty rooms, with pictures on the walls, he considered among the absolute necessities of home life. He never expected the poor to eat tainted food or wear ragged clothes, or sleep without proper covering, merely because they were not gentry or well-to-do tradespeople; and in the education of their children he discovered a great want, the very same want which ruins so many boys and girls in the higher walks of life, namely, the absence of discrimination in the selection of employment for the young.

A healthy child is never voluntarily idle. What we call "mischief" is often the endeavour of a nature to tell us why it was brought into the world as it was, and what it ought to

accomplish before it goes out of it. So in Prayerhaven Children's Industrial Home, every child was carefully watched, and the tendencies of her mind noted, so that the special work committed to her might be as delightsome and profitable as possible. Girls were placed on a perfect equality with boys. If work was remunerative there was no question asked as to whether it had been done by masculine or feminine fingers.

Perhaps male labour is not paid any too highly, but female labour is certainly paid too poorly, in nearly every instance under the old regime. Women and girls are not supposed to squander half their earnings on beer and tobacco, it is true, but are men and boys to be paid extra so that they may always have some spare cash with which to enrich the publican and tobacconist, and help to keep woman in thraldom because man holds the purse-strings? Marriage and motherhood are right and natural for all women who enter upon these states of life voluntarily and with their eyes open, but woe to the nation where victims are led in throngs to the hymenial altar, because they must marry or starve. The incompetency of girls is not due to constitutional disadvantages either physical or mental, but to the false ideas they imbibe in their youth, concerning woman's intellectual and industrial inferiority to man.

Mr. Bruin's Orphanage scheme had for its object the training of girls to be independent of men when they grew up; then if they married they would be the equals not the slaves of their husbands, and when they entered into wedlock they would not marry for a home and an income, but because some union of souls led them to cast in their lot with their life partners. Mr. Bruin was not severe on people who got divorced, but the motto of all his exertion was: strive rather to prevent an evil than to cure one. He believed a great deal in sanitary measures, but vaccination and drug medication he abhorred. He was also a liberal advocate of what is commonly called Vegetarianism, though it would be too much to say that he never tasted fish, flesh, or fowl, but though plenty of good butter, cheese, milk, and eggs, with a profusion of vegetables, fruits and cereals were provided for the children at Prayerhaven, meat, fish, and poultry were never bought for them. If they ever got any, they had only what was sent to them as a free gift from benefactors.

We will just take a peep at the girls as they are seated one day at dinner, in the cozy and rather crowded dining-room at Prayerhaven Home.

About thirty are seated at the table. Two of the eldest girls do the cooking, four act as waitresses, and two more are assisting in the kitchen. Everything is passed in from the kitchen to the dining-room by means of a slide in the wall, so no time and strength are consumed in carrying trays. Work is thus, on the plan adopted in the best American boarding-houses, reduced to a minimum, and we shall always find that the hardest and most effective workers minimize their labour and save their strength, so that with the least expenditure the greatest good results may be forthcoming.

It is just one o'clock. The children breakfast at eight, have lessons from 9.30 till 12, and again from 2.30 till 4. They have a hearty tea and supper together at six. They go to bed at nine and get up at seven. Dinner is always ready precisely at the hour, and a good substantial dinner it is. First, there is soup—two kinds of soup—lentil and macaroni; no meat whatever is used in the soup, and yet the flavour is delicious, and it is highly nutritious and thoroughly satisfying. After the soup come omelets, boiled eggs, poached eggs on toast, macaroni with cheese, vegetable pie, besides cauliflower, cabbage, baked and mashed potatoes, and curried rice. The children eat all they want, but they are not encouraged to taste everything on the table, though a liberal variety is always supplied. With their dinner they can drink either milk or water, and at breakfast and supper they are allowed cocoa, chocolate, or coffee. Tea is a luxury, and only provided on Sundays and special occasions. When the vegetables and savouries have been partaken of, rice-pudding, stewed prunes with rice, apple-pie, oranges, apples, nuts, brown bread and butter, and home-made cheese are served; and after these three courses of good, nutritious fare, the children go out to play until the school-bell rings at 2.25, to announce the afternoon session.

Some of the children were puny and rickety when they came to Prayerhaven a year ago, but as we see them on the occasion of our unannounced visit, ten months after the opening of the Home, they all look rosy, hearty and happy. Of course some are stronger than others, but not one is an invalid.

They are all dressed neatly but inexpensively, in print

frocks and pinafores. Their hair is cut short, to save trouble in dressing and to facilitate the daily ablutions, which in this establishment are very thorough and regular. Every day every inmate takes a bath, not necessarily a cold one, for the wise doctor, who is also a magnetic physician and understands the diverse needs of human systems, declares that many delicate children and adults are seriously injured by leaping out of a hot bed into a cold bath. Neither is the bath taken in a cold room : there is a furnace in the house, and the bathrooms are thoroughly warmed and kept at an even temperature. £200 have been laid out in interior fittings, and in the partially completed School Chapel which adjoins the house, and which is open to visitors as well as inmates at regular hours daily.

This School Chapel promises to become a great centre of attraction in the neighbourhood, and it may be worth our readers' while to pay it a visit some Sunday, and see how the services are conducted and how the children enjoy themselves while they are receiving sound moral instruction, and engaging in charming exercises, in which all are encouraged to participate.

The temporary chapel is only built of wood, the permanent structure of red brick is awaiting erection till funds are forthcoming, as it is a rule at Prayerhaven never to engage in any work till the necessary funds for carrying it out are in the keeping of the responsible parties. Though only a very plain and somewhat rude structure, this little chapel, which will seat about 150 people, is so great an attraction in the neighbourhood that the Vicar of the parish has preached three sermons against it, telling his hearers it was a snare to decoy souls to the bottomless pit, while the minister of the Methodist chapel is afraid to go past it, for fear the lightning of God's anger will strike his inoffensive head, on its way to this "vessel fitted for destruction."

But, what fearful orgies are practised within its unpretending walls; what is the nature of the crime committed by those who worship there? Surely their guilt is none other than their utter freedom from conventional restrictions, and their perfectly natural theology.

Though Mr. Howard Bruin cannot leave his own duties in London to officiate ever on a Sunday, he sometimes gives a lecture on some week-day evening, and occasionally Bertha

occupies the desk and delivers one of her sublime inspirational addresses, followed by poems; she sometimes writes tales for the children, and sends them for the Sunday reading.

The Sunday services commence at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. The afternoon hour from three till four is devoted to singing practise, and the children greatly enjoy it. On Sunday mornings there is no sermon or lecture, but in the middle of the service there is catechizing for half-an-hour or three-quarters, and to hear the children ask questions is truly amusing. Mr. Bruin, Senior, a fine old farmer, about sixty-five, always officiates in the morning; in the evening he sometimes reads one of his nephew's printed addresses to young people, and at other times a friend from London speaks to the congregation, which is often largely made up of adults; but as they are mostly simple country folk, the instruction given to the children suits their necessities better than anything more difficult to comprehend; and then the younger children never go to the seven o'clock meeting: they are put to bed at 6.30.

Fresh flowers are always on the table. The hymns sung are a selection made by Mr. Howard Bruin, including selections from Longfellow, Whittier, Tennyson, and many of our very greatest modern poets, in addition to a large number of standard hymns and moral pieces, and a good many original rhymes for children, some of which were written through Bertha's hand by one of her guiding spirits. There is a fine American organ in the room, which is well played by a young man who gives his services freely to the good cause, and who having outgrown orthodoxy, is glad to have somewhere to go on Sunday, where he is not annoyed by hearing sermons distasteful alike to his moral sense and intellect. Two ladies in the district have agreed to instruct the children in singing, and as they both have fine voices, and often sing solos and sometimes an anthem, as the organist has a good tenor voice and sings harmoniously with them, the singing is really better than at the parish church, and is the means of attracting many lovers of good music, who are not very strongly attached to illiberal dogmas.

The walls are decorated with pictures, portraying acts of love and sympathy, which fully equal the heroic deeds attributed to the saints of the Roman Calendar. A stained-glass window is being prepared for the permanent chapel, the subject of which is a lady of evident culture and

refinement, wading through the snow on a bitter winter's night, to rescue a child who has fallen asleep and will surely perish before morning, unless rescued without a moment's unnecessary delay. A rift in the clouds is shown, and there is beheld the angel form of the lost child's mother, pointing with her finger to the spot where her little girl is lying freezing. The lady on earth follows irresistibly, intuitively, this heavenly prompting, and the child is saved. This scene occupies two lights; the third light represents the child in a comfortable cot in the kind lady's own home. She is sitting writing at a table, and the child's mother in spirit is represented in soft, fleecy robes, scarcely discernible except in a good light, watching over her sleeping darling.

Such scenes as these will appear in the art of the future. The pictures of to-morrow will not represent emaciated, emasculated skeletons with unearthly countenances, clad in sackcloth, looking up to heaven as though the earth were too vile a place for their pharisaic feet to tread; neither shall we be constantly found gazing upon skulls, and dragons, and snakes, and feel ourselves obliged to admire them because they are pronounced master-pieces of art by critics.

A renaissance in art implies a new creation, a new set of subjects, a new class of models. We want the divinity of life in our own day portrayed, and while we owe an unpayable debt to the past, still we must ever remember the past is resurrected in the present.

To-day is the fruit of yesterday and the seed of to-morrow. Past experiences have made us and our planet what we are, evolutionists, and so all progressive minds must necessarily look to the future rather than to the days that are gone, for highest examples of self-denial and true devotion to duty.

One here and there, in days gone by, may have achieved such glorious conquests over self and sin, that he is entitled to our undying fealty and devotion, but in the coming age, may we not hope and expect that the multitude will resemble the exceptional units in the past, and the world as a globe, rather than merely an infinitesimal fraction of it, constitute the real garden of Eden, the true Utopia.

With some such prospect as this before them, the world's true workers, heaven-inspired, can pursue unfalteringly life's toilsome way. Great results may not be immediately forthcoming, but patient workers are sure at length to win. The

insect, born almost directly the egg is laid, comes speedily to maturity and as speedily passes away. The oak-tree and the elephant require many years to unfold, because so much is infolded in them, therefore it takes a long time to bring it out, but when brought out it is able to remain, it need not immediately depart.

So with such an enterprise as Prayerhaven Industrial Home, it may be twenty years or more before the real value and magnitude of such an institution will be seen and acknowledged by the masses; but it is a step in the right direction. It aims at making every human being self-supporting, it recognises the dignity of every kind of labour, it places justice before a spurious imitation of love, called charity; a mawkish, sentimental, almost costless and largely assumed virtue, which allows injustice to drive the down-trodden into the streets, and then makes a virtue of treating them as paupers, giving them relief only in such a way as forfeits the self-respect of the recipient, and lays flattering unction to the self-righteous soul of the already far too self-complacent donor.

Justice is a sphere of heavenly and earthly perfection. Love is a hemisphere, so is Wisdom. Put wisdom and love together in equal proportions, and then you produce true justice, which is so merciful that it never says, does, or thinks anything the world calls kind or unkind, except with a deliberate and open-eyed view to the accomplishment of some definite good result.

Prayerhaven Home was not a house of refuge for the destitute, not a pauper establishment in any sense; it was a College of Industry, and whenever a really good workwoman was needed, even at the vicarage, people knew where to send for an honest, capable, and conscientious person.

The girls were not encouraged to leave the home or go out to service, but for all the work they did, over and above the amount needed to compensate the proprietors for their maintenance, a fair equivalent was placed to their account in the bank, of which one of the greatest friends of the home was treasurer.

At the end of five years, one girl who had entered the home at fourteen, and left it at nineteen, to accompany a family to Australia, with whom she went out as nursery governess, had £67 to her account, and as her outfit was provided and her passage paid, when she reached Adelaide she felt inde-

pendent, and in case of emergency would not have been reduced to any unpleasant straits. This money she wisely allowed to remain in care of the trustees of the home, and whenever she could do so she added to it. Five per cent. interest was allowed, and when she married (we heard of her marriage only this year, to a well-to-do tradesman, just setting up in business), she had over £100 in her own right, and she was a London beggar eight years before her marriage.

Other cases might be cited, other illustrations given to emphasize the great good accomplished by this noble institution.

Lady Armadale still continues one of its patrons. Miss Cornwallis Rhineloch visits it frequently, and helps amazingly in every way she can, and every once in a while we hear of a new addition being made to it, and an increasingly large number of inmates being received.

Scarcely one in fifty turns out other than well. The discipline is strict, but kind, and Mr. and Miss Bruin, from their new home in Texas, U.S.A., are constantly hearing such flourishing accounts of its success, that they almost wish themselves back again in the old Buckinghamshire valleys, where they spent so many happy days in childhood and early youth.

We should not have devoted so much space to this Home, were it not that our sincerest convictions are, that such works as these are worth more than all the sermons preached, and all the books ever written on reform; for while the spoken and written word may be the John the Baptist, heralding the Messiah, the true lamb of God which removes the sin of the world, can surely be naught else than a spirit of love for God and man, outwrought in schemes of practical redemption, which in saving the world from the commission of guilt, saves it from the essential and purgative penalties thereto attached.

We have now, by referring to Mr. and Miss Bruin in America, skipped over years which are yet unmentioned in this narrative, and as our readers will perceive they are getting near the end of the story, and their whetted curiosity on many points has doubtless as yet been by no means satisfied, we must condense into our three remaining chapters some record of Bertha's travels and experiences in the home of her adoption, for which she sailed in the autumn of 187-, accompanied by her kind and faithful friends, the Bruins.

The English public wept at her departure from old England's shores. Crowds came to see her off, but all acknowledged that it was imperatively necessary that she should have a change; for though she had derived much benefit from Signor Infuriari, and had many warm and tender friends in England, her provincial tour had so prostrated her, and London fogs increased her ailments so considerably, that Ladies Armadale and Bun, though they cried when they said good-bye to her, were so much alarmed at her increasing weakness, that they readily agreed to the dictum of the spirits, that she must have a perfect change of scene and air, and a completely new field of labour.

She had heard nothing from her brother for fifteen months, and had every reason to believe he was drowned on a pleasure excursion on the Mississippi; where a boat was wrecked, and all the crew perished. Mrs. Sweetgeese had dropped down dead in an apoplectic fit, while dressing for church one Sunday evening. Signor Infuriari had offered Bertha his hand in marriage, three times over, and she had refused him. Mrs. Camomile had become a widow, and wanted to go to New York to find a sister, who was her only near relative on earth. So circumstances favoured Bertha's departure from her native land; as they seem always to favour, when wise and knowing spirits have the special guidance of a human life and its destinies.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF AMERICA.

WE hear so much about America now-a-days, and such conflicting reports reach our ears concerning the salubrity of the climate, the cost of living, the soundness of republican institutions, the freedom of the press, the culture of the people, &c., &c., that one is apt to be considerably confounded if he relies and acts too much on mere testimony concerning the United States, and their boundless resources.

No doubt every one speaks truly from his standpoint, and endeavours faithfully to transmit to others the results of his own experience and observation; but travellers and settlers alike see everything and everybody largely coloured, diminished, or magnified, according to the tenderness or asperity fate has manifested in its dealings with them personally.

No doubt, when that justly celebrated novelist, Charles Dickens, caricatured the Yankees, and American institutions generally, he had been brought into unpleasant nearness to that particular type of American, who is noted for his inquisitiveness, obtrusiveness, and vulgarity; and it is not to be wondered at that many a stranger, visiting for the first time a comparatively new country, should find his Anglican conservatism pretty rudely shocked by many of the customs of the Americans.

New York is so cosmopolitan a city at present, that you can live in England, America, Germany, Italy, or France, without passing beyond the city limits. You can live in a veritable Polish Jewish *Ghetto*; you can associate with Jews who make one feel ready to curse the very name of Shakespeare, for introducing *Shylock* into the "*Merchant of Venice*" as a typical Hebrew, and you can jostle against Jews, and Gentiles too, for that matter, in your daily walks, if you only walk in the right districts, who seem such veritable *Shylocks*, that you imagine the great poet and dramatist must have lived in company with the very men who elbow you constantly on the streets.

You can go to hotels, and pay five dollars per day for board and lodging, and pay fabulously for extras besides, and then declare that New York prices are frightfully high, because you pay about eight shillings (two dollars) at an English chop-house in London, for very inferior accommodation, not one whit superior to that obtainable in New York for the same money. Those guide-book writers who inform travellers that shillings go in London as far as dollars in New York, are either wilfully misinforming their readers, or they have never been to America, or they are utterly destitute of the power of comparison. Compare fairly English and American prices, and you will find it costs just about as much to live on one side the Atlantic as on the other, with this exception, that gentlemen certainly do have to pay more for their hats and cloth garments, than they need to pay in England. But then salaries in America are usually higher than in England, and in this way things are about evenly balanced for the great majority of mankind.

Let emigrants remember, that if they go to New York, Boston, Philadelphia, or Chicago, to loiter about the streets, pick their teeth on the steps of large hotels, that passers-by may think they reside or at least dine there, when they are living in a back attic in a back street and take their meals at a five-cent restaurant, they will rue the day when they embarked for foreign shores; but those who have pluck, energy, industry, health and perseverance, who will be frugal in their habits and careful of the company they keep, if they are willing to try their fortunes away from the older centres of business, and take up their abode somewhere "out West," among the new and rapidly growing towns and cities, which are springing up like mushrooms in all the districts between Chicago and San Francisco, stand a pretty good chance of carving out for themselves a place and name in a new country, and making a fortune far more rapidly than in an older and more densely populated land.

But it is not the object of this volume to give advice to emigrants; that we may give at length in a future story. Our duty now is to follow Bertha and her friends in their voyage across the ocean, and introduce our readers to some of the people they met on shipboard, and in the cities they visited on arrival at their journey's end.

A sea voyage to most people is not a particularly pleasant

undertaking. What with *mal de mer*, *ennui*, and the limited room at the disposal of each passenger, voyaging is rather like temporary imprisonment, and no matter how stout of heart a girl may be, or how thoroughly convinced of the protecting power of guardian spirits, she can but feel at times a little apprehensive as to the welcome she will receive among strangers.

Bertha was a good sailor. She was ill when she went on board, and her friends anticipated great suffering for her, but their fears were groundless. The first day or two she was very languid, and slept nearly all day as well as through the night; but on the third day, she was well enough to be out on deck, and her greatest pleasure was to sit out at sunset, watching those glorious sunsets which are never equalled on land, and then watch the stars come out, one by one, and transform the dark sky into a magnificent canopy of light and beauty. The reflection of the moonlight on the waters charmed her more than all beside, and then the phosphorescent lights, which played so constantly upon the waves, and the gambols of the porpoises, which many of the passengers would persist in mistaking for whales, amused and delighted her so much, that wrapped up in warm, thick furs, in a comfortable steamer chair, facing seaward, on the most sheltered side of the vessel, she would often sit gazing and dreaming till midnight.

Ladies and gentlemen, talking loudly, would often pass her by; sailors would shout to each other at the very top of their stentorian voices, as they performed the tasks from which loud noise seems so inseparable; but nothing broke her reverie: she didn't see the people, she didn't hear the sounds, and many were the inquisitive glances cast at her, as in all the fragile loveliness of budding womanhood, she sat out on deck alone, and as utterly unconcerned with her neighbours as though they belonged to a world with which she had nothing in common.

At this season (autumn) the steamers sailing for Boston are apt to be a little dull, but they usually carry very refined and pleasant people, and most of those who were on board were of this stamp. But horror of horrors! there was a piano on board, and as certainly as moths are attracted to a flame, is a piano the focal centre of attraction for everybody who can't sing without frightening every

person, who possesses the slightest ear for music, right out of the saloon.

Mrs. Cordingley Jones, Mrs. Victoria Fitzmoorhouse, Mr. Sturgeon Finny, and Mr. Mackerel Codfish, constituted themselves the "Cecilia Quartette," and oh! how they did howl; and what was worse, two young men who didn't know *a* from *b* in music, undertook to give singing lessons to the young ladies on board, and organized concerts for the evenings.

Many persons of considerable musical culture were on board, besides Bertha and Miss Bruin, who played divinely, while Mrs. Camomile's voice was a rich contralto; but not a soul who knew his notes, or had a voice more melodious than a tom-cat's on a housetop, could ever get near the piano. So the saloon, on fine days, was deserted, and on wet ones filled by persons who strove to talk loudly enough to drown the atrocious bawling at the pianó.

Bertha enjoyed the fun caused by the music immensely, and was amused, rather than offended, when Mr. Codfish told her she had a very poor voice, and that it had never been cultivated. But enough of these disturbers of the peace, who are sometimes conceited enough to imagine they are giving unalloyed pleasure to their fellow passengers, and always selfish enough to be utterly indifferent to the feelings of others; we will now take a hurried glance at the passengers, as they are seated at the dinner-table, and endeavour to catch some of the conversation as it passes audibly from one to the other, during the afternoon stroll on deck, in which every one who is able participates.

First and foremost is Captain Ezekiel Serve-the-Lord. He has been deacon of the 27th Baptist Society, in Fiddlesticks, for thirty-eight years, and has so far distinguished himself for nautical knowledge, that he has never, but once, commanded anything but a herring boat, and lives in comfort on his wife's annuity of 2,000 dollars per annum. He and his bosom friend and room-mate, Dr. Zechariah Malachi Brimstone, F.G.Q., R.H.V., M.P.O., &c., &c., minister of the 13th Presbyterian Church, in Ashpit, are always discussing theology in such loud tones, at the dinner-table and on deck, that a debating society is at once organized among the passengers, who take far more delight in worsting Messrs. Serve-the-Lord and Brimstone, than in settling any disputed

point which may arise in politics or sociology. Then there is Rev. Theodore Applepie, a Unitarian of very advanced views, and very controversial withal, who rather enjoys being told by Dr. Brimstone, a hundred times a-day, that he is a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction, and that angels will laugh as they throw burning coals on to his naked flesh in hell. There is Dr. Quizington, an M.D., quite a young man, with a pretty, curling moustache, and an eye-glass, who says "Aw! indeed!" to every remark addressed to him, and never fails to get his dinner twice over, and drink someone else's wine at the table; he then bows graciously and with a smirking smile acknowledges his mistake, after he has emptied the bottle, but, of course, without offering to pay for a substitute. Then there are two interesting widows from Vermont, Mrs. Waydown Simpson, and Mrs. Downeast Jeffery, veritable Yankees, long, sharp, calculating, guessing women; not at all bad-hearted, but evidently intent on second marriages with wealthy shipwrights or tanners, who seem to be their special favourites. Then there is Miss Mincemeat Chopsley, a Boston boarding-house keeper, with a very long tongue, and a ready answer for every one who dares to dispute the claims made by herself concerning the great superiority of her house in Cateaten Street, over all other similar dwellings in the city. To hear her describe the magnificence of her twelve-roomed house, in a side street at the South end, you would think it was a palace, at which even a queen would open her eyes with admiration and delight. To hear of her table, you would think the linen and the silver had cost enough to build a cathedral in Liverpool. To hear of the illustrious personages who stayed with her, whenever they visited "the Hub," you would fancy Congress emptied itself into her residence, immediately the fagged-out senators got leave of absence from Washington.

Had not Theobald Oyster and Horatio Clams, a senator and journalist respectively, filled in the gap with their literary criticisms and animated disputes over the character of Benjamin Butteredbread, who was an aspiring candidate for the presidency, little knowledge of American history, manners and customs, except in a most erratic form, would our friends have derived from their fellow passengers. But Oyster and Clams, though both of them insufferably conceited, and rather familiar in their mode of address to strangers, were very

entertaining and even brilliant conversationalists. They had everything and everybody at their fingers' ends. The latest bit of Washington scandal concerning the president elect; the latest *bon mots* of the most fashionable New York club house; the most recent morsel of cultured rhetoric from the literary circles of Boston;—all were sandwiched in along with accurate and elaborate descriptions of Signora Tricotrini and Signor Bellodomini, the two latest additions to the Sugarcane Opera Company, which was then performing at the Temple of Sculpture, in New York; glowing accounts of Mrs. Plumtree, the latest sensation on the serio-comic stage, and a vast amount of amusing and instructive chit-chat, all about the hotels, boarding-houses, stores, churches, theatres, price of clothes, provisions, state of trade, and a thousand and one other topics of vital interest to one who has just left his native shores, and is about to embark on another section of the voyage of a life, in what is to him a brap new steamer, with an untried crew, over waters he has not yet learned to navigate.

It is surprising, however, to remark how greatly the differences between England and America are exaggerated. An Englishman on board, Doctor Eustis Bully, would lead one to imagine that America was only fit for alligators and untamed Africans in the South, and hordes of buffaloes and naked Indians in the North; while Doctor Brimstone talked as though England was too contemptible a hole for a dog to live in. To hear these two converse was better than pantomime.

Doctor Brimstone roared out in a frightfully nasal twang:

" You Britshers starve your help, and keep your working men on mouldy crusts, in filthy attics, all through their mortal lives, and then throw their bodies into a pit, where thousands are left to lie rotting together till your country is desolated with God's anger, in the shape of cholera morbus, which sweeps the lot of you into the bottomless pit in a jiffy."

Doctor Bully, an eminent surgeon, by the way, belched forth in tones of thunder:

" I tell you what it is, old Brimstone, if you don't leave off insulting the English, I'll pitch you overboard before you can squeal Jack Robinson!" adding to this threat a long string of imprecations unfit for publication. " American institutions!" hissed Bully, at the top of his voice, " I say, curse 'em; they're nothing but swindle, humbug, fraud, deviltry,

from beginning to end. I'd rather be a dog than a Yankee ; nay, I'd rather be a mouse, to be put to death, in a tub in an English kitchen, than be President of the United States."

How high these altercations might have risen, and to what blows such furious words might soon have given place, had it not been for the intervention of the Bruins, Bertha, Clams, and Oyster, it is impossible to say. But with the Bruins and Bertha, thorough-bred English people on the one side, and the Senator and Journalist, typical Americans on the other, the combatants were slowly made to see how puerile and offensive were their senseless disputation.

The Hon. Theobald Oyster (you see there are honourables in America, though the Americans profess to despise titles) was a short, wiry man, about forty years of age, with keen grey eyes, a heavy moustache, dark hair streaked with silver, a prominent nose, loud, clear voice, high cheek-bones, firm mouth, and broad, low forehead. He was not over scrupulous ; his conscience was not morbidly sensitive. Yet he was by no means a bad sort of fellow.

Mr. Horatio Clams was a tall, finely-built, singularly handsome young gentleman, not over twenty-five. His hair was blue-black, like a raven's wing. His eyes were large, deep, dark and lustrous. His moustache was a gem, and he knew it. He was always faultlessly dressed, and carried with him wherever he went an evident air of self-conscious superiority.

Bertha admired him. He in some way reminded her of her brother, as he had much the same imperial way with him, and as he was of a communicative disposition, and liked the society of literary and artistic celebrities, he took quite a liking to Bertha, and he and she had many long talks together out on deck, till Mrs. Grundy grew grumpy, and many were the suggestions made by that hateful old scandal-monger, that something was surely on between the New York Journalist and the young Englishwoman, who was so much in his company.

The Bruins and Mrs. Camomile were spoken to about it several times, but they were not supporters of ecclesiastical cant, and therefore they did not agree with a ritualistic scribbler, who about that time had defined Mrs. Grundy in a magazine, as "the average conscience of Churchmen."

God have mercy on the average Churchman, if his conscience is so foul that he must needs stultify everybody else's

reputation, and blacken every fair name, because his own life is so abominable and his own thoughts so impure, that he proves that the counter-statement to the oft-quoted maxim: "To the pure all things are pure," is true in his case: "To the impure all things are impure."

Bertha cared no more for scandal than she did for midgets. She pitied the scandal-mongers, and was sorry they found it necessary to advertise themselves so unnecessarily in so unfavourable a light. Whenever they circulated tales about her or her friends, she correctly judged that they had done something themselves of which they were so ashamed, or the consequences of which they so much dreaded, that in order to throw suspicion off themselves, they attributed their own misdoings to the innocent, whom they tried to make their scape-goats.

If everyone against whom slanders are circulated, will just let the scandal-mongers see that they are really the suspected parties, as they are usually the guilty ones, defamation of character will soon come to be a less harmless pastime for those who engage in it, than unhappily it is to-day.

The steamer *Orinika* made the passage in ten days, exactly, and when the final good-byes had to be said, these people, in many instances so unlike each other, and so ill-adapted to enjoy each other's company, were really sorry to make their last adieux.

The Bruins, Bertha, and Mrs. Camomile having no place in view, and knowing no one in Boston, readily acceded to Miss Chopsley's urgent request that they should engage a suite of rooms in her most eligible residence in Cateaten Street. Mr. Clams, intending to pass a fortnight in Boston before going on to New York, expressed his willingness also to take room, and Mr. Oyster following suite, quite a happy family soon crowded themselves into two large cabs, as Mrs. Way-down Jeffery and Mrs. Downeast Simpsom concluded, after a little haggling, to join the party.

The baggage express system in America is a splendid institution, and saves the traveller an immense amount of needless anxiety and trouble; as no matter how much luggage you may have with you, the express agent comes on board the train or boat before you leave it, takes your name and address, and gives you a receipt for the small amount charged for delivery; and unless you are very expeditious in your

movements, the chances are your baggage gets to your house or hotel before you do, or certainly not long after you.

Passing over the East Boston Ferry, our party was much pleased with the appearance of the "Modern Athens" on a fine autumn morning. The gilded dome of the State House, the numerous palatial buildings which are to be met with in all parts of the city, the many church spires, and the beautiful suburban districts of Roxbury, Dorchester, &c., all looked peculiarly inviting to the visitors, while the Americans who had just got home again, were delighted to see their home after absence from it during the past summer.

Landing at the bottom of Hanover Street, Miss Chopsaley hailed two cabs, though the street cars would have answered every purpose quite as well, into one of which she deposited Mr. and Miss Bruin, Bertha and Mrs. Camomile, with Mr. Olams on the box with the driver; in the other she planted herself, accompanied by Mrs. Jeffery, Mrs. Simpson, and Mr. Oyster. After about half-an-hour's slow driving, they reached Cateaten Street, where they were ushered into rather seedy apartments, looked at from an American point of view, though to English eyes accustomed to English lodging-houses, they were sumptuous.

The English lodging-house system has never been introduced into America, and let's hope it never will be. Mrs. Camomile told heart-rending tales of a cousin of hers who kept a lodging-house in Birmingham; poor Mrs. Terrytoy, an excellent, well-educated woman, was sadly reduced in circumstances through a depreciation in the value of sealskins, owing to the bad trade which affected luxuries all over the country. She actually took two gentlemen for nine shillings a-week, gave them her best sitting-room and two bed-rooms, cooked for them, washed for them, did everything, and was then coolly told she ought to take seven-and-sixpence, because Miss Wormsheart took that amount in Fulex Alley.

The American boarding-house keeper is usually a shrewd, calculating woman, one with whom you take liberties at your peril. She must be a close reckoner, or she could never pay £200 a-year for a sixteen-roomed house unfurnished, and then give you a good room for six shillings a-week, or take two persons together in a large, square room for twelve shillings. The thorough-going boarding-house keeper has no parlour: she cannot understand any one wanting a large room alone,

and as to private sitting-rooms, they are requirements so utterly beyond her ken, that you might as well talk Greek as ask for one. There are many expensive domiciles where you have all the room you want, and all the attendance, for that matter, but the Cateaten establishment, kept by the worthy Miss Chopsley, was a typical boarding-house.

Conforming to the established rules of the house, the party doubled up. Miss Bruin and Mrs. Camomile took a large front, square room, up one flight, between them. Bertha had the hall room adjoining. Mrs. Simpson and Mrs. Jeffery had the square room back on the same floor, on which was situated an excellent bath-room. Messrs. Oyster and Bruin preferred single rooms; so they had small ones. Mr. Clams had the large, square room front, up two flights, as he never cared what he paid for accommodation, and being a journalist he needed conveniences for writing in privacy.

Dinner was served at 12.30. The dinner bell rang deafeningly through the house. Miss Chopsley's aunt, Mrs. Toddy-grass, had assumed sole charge of the house during her niece's enforced absence from home, occasioned by the death of a relative in Scotland, who had left Miss Chopsley £200, and it had cost her £80 to go after it, so she was not very much set up over her legacy; but she had seen England, and to hear her talking over her oyster stew and fried sausages that day at dinner, you would have thought she had been so frequently in the presence of royalty, that she could scarcely count the times she had dined with an H.R.H.

Dinner proceeded pleasantly enough. To the party from England the oyster stew was a novelty, and the pies looked singular. However, their appetites were keen, and they dispatched their meal with hearty good-will, asking no questions for conscience' sake.

It being Saturday, and the theatres being all open at 2 p.m., the whole party attended the "Garden," where the performances usually equal those given at the best theatres in London.

Returning to six o'clock supper, they made the acquaintance of several other boarders who were out at mid-day, and enquiring of Miss Chopsley concerning the religious services &c., to be held on the following day, she handed them the *Scriptum*, the *Harbinger*, the *Planet*, the *Voyager*, and, last but not least, the *Ripe Banana*, a Spiritualistic periodical

which ranks among the most widely-respected journals in the country.

They all concluded to go to the Church of the Unity in the morning, and that of the Trinity in the afternoon; in the evening they proposed attending the Parkhurst Memorial, where Mrs. Aurora Bergen was delivering a course of Religio-Scientific lectures, on successive Sunday evenings, at 7.30.

Unity Church is a large, plain-looking structure, in the form of a Greek temple. It is accounted one of the best of the advanced Unitarian places of worship in the city, and its minister, the Rev. Spencer Highculture, is regarded as one of the greatest pulpit lights of "the Hub." Trinity Church is Episcopalian, almost identical with the Church of England. Rev. Philippi Rivers is everywhere respected, as one of the most eloquent and genial clergymen in America, but as he does not usually preach at the afternoon service, our friends missed hearing him. However, they greatly enjoyed the music, and Mr. Highculture's sermon in the morning, was a sufficient treat for all day.

Mrs. Aurora Bergen gave them the choice spiritual viands for which, at least, some of the party hungered. Her lecture, on "The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament showeth His Handy-work," was the finest piece of dramatic oratory to which our friends had ever listened.

Unlike the graceful and poetic Mrs. Coral, this lady pours forth torrents of glowing words, like streams of liquid fire rolling down the sides of Etna or Vesuvius when in eruption; then having electrified her hearers with the gorgeousness of her imagery and the mightiness of her ideas, her voice sinks almost to a whisper, her face is lighted with the sweetest of heart-winning smiles, as she touches the tenderest chords of human nature, in her sublime delineations of the world of souls, in which we all, sooner or later, recover all we have ever lost on earth, and find, at length, more than all we can desire, even in our moments of divinest spiritual ecstasy.

The hall was crowded. Before and after the lecture, the grand organ played some thrilling selections of superb music from the grand old masters; and Bertha, wishing very much for an introduction to the highly-gifted lecturer, was bold enough to introduce herself and her friends *sans ceremonie*.

Mrs. Bergen received them very kindly, told them to call

upon her at her residence in Cheesecake Park, the following day, an invitation they were delighted to respond to.

Calling at 268, Cheesecake Park, they found Dr. and Mrs. Bergen at home, and very glad to see them. They were also much delighted with a gentleman from Australia, who was residing with them, Mr. Josephus Wantacracker, who entertained them with his wit and humour, almost as much as the Bergens did with their charming descriptions of California and New Zealand.

Calling at the office of the *Ripe Banana*, they found the editors and all the *attachés* to constitute a staff of highly intelligent, affable, and kind-hearted gentlemen, and as Bertha contemplated a lecturing tour through the States, her early introduction to such representative minds was of the utmost importance to her.

Altogether her first impressions of America were *couleur de rose*.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

## A REMARKABLE SEANCE.

BERTHA soon commenced her public labours in Boston. After she had spent a few days in visiting the lions of the city, she began her work as a teacher of spiritual truths, in right good earnest; and many were the concerts at which she sang so finely and acceptably, that not a few who had interest at stake when a fresh, young singer threatened to displace the cracked-voiced fraternity—who would be hissed off the stage were it not for the hired *claque*, and the flowers they order at the florists and send to themselves, accompanied by cards they have surreptitiously extracted from the stock-in-trade of a printer whose office they have visited,—declared that Bertha had no voice and no talent.

The truth was, she saw through the shams of life in Boston, as she had seen through them in London; and though she was never censorious, never ready to pick a quarrel with any one, she was not the girl to lie still and be trampled on, because nature had excited the envy of her less-favoured brethren and sisters, by giving her an unusually large share of the gifts we all most envy.

Bertha's *début* at Music Hall, was a perfect success: even the upper gallery was full, and it never is except on rare occasions. Every newspaper in the city complimented her highly. The *Harbinger* published lengthy abstracts of her lectures, and praised her singing without stint or reservation. Horatio Clams, who corresponded for five New York papers, sent on brilliant descriptions of the new star to the metropolis, and when, after a few weeks in Boston, she removed to the larger city, her appearance on the platform was always the signal for an unusually large and influential audience.

Mr. Bruin had been occupying the pulpits of several liberal churches, and had delivered a great many lectures on reformatory subjects, and his success had been scarcely less than Bertha's, when one day they met, at a reception in Brooklyn, a most charming lady, apparently thirty years of age or thereabouts.

She was dressed in *Parisienne* costume. Her hair was cut short, and curly. She was one of those extremely fascinating women, who captivate all who come beneath the light of their smiles.

Unfortunately, some of these charmers are veritable syrens, who lead the unwary to destruction, as *ignis fatui* lure belated travellers in the desert to their doom: the poor, benighted pilgrims, mistaking these false lights for fruitful oases, where they may find shelter, food, and water, both for themselves and their weary camels.

But Signora Georgiana was a veritable angel of mercy; a spirit of kindness, truth, and wisdom on the earth. She made you believe in the innate goodness of humanity, no matter how pessimistic your views might have become, through contact with the intriguing world. She was so high principled, so humane, so self-denying, so ready to give her last cent to help the weary and the starving, that she seemed to all who were not quite dead to all appeals made to our better nature, as an angel from heaven, enrobed in mortal guise, to lay hold upon the better nature of mankind, and call out that divine spark within, which only a true man or woman can ever discover in a neighbour's breast.

Signora Georgiana was by birth an Italian. Her husband, who had preceded her into the unseen world some years since, was an extravagant count, whom she had married to please her parents, when only seventeen. They had no children, so at the early age of twenty-three, the beautiful Signora was left a widow. Though not a mother herself, she was passionately fond of children, and resolved by all means at her disposal to assist in rescuing some, at least, from the misery and want into which such multitudes, orphans especially, so deeply fall.

Signora Georgiana had a method of teaching, peculiarly her own. She individualized all the little ones whom she took under her protecting wing. She watched them at their play, even when they were engaged in mischief, and with such kind and careful judgment did she assign them their respective tasks, that she overruled for good even that inveterate love of destruction, which characterizes little ones so frequently.

She gave them pieces of coloured stuff to tear, and with these fragments she had pillows, mattresses and other use-

ful articles stuffed for other children. She made all her charges know that they engaged in useful industry, and so pleasant did she make their lessons to them, that at three years of age many of them knew a great deal more than most children know at seven. She taught them to play and sing. One child knew his notes perfectly at three years of age, and could play nicely on the piano when only four.

Signora Georgiana was herself a highly-accomplished vocalist. Her singing reached the souls of all who heard it, and her accentuation of every syllable was so distinct, that every word she uttered could be heard perfectly at the farthest corner of the largest hall in which concerts were given in London or New York.

This lady, like all philanthropists and reformers, had met with direful opposition. She had even been imprisoned on account of her zeal in a holy cause, but nothing daunted, she came out stronger and more resolute than she went in, and though she changed her scene of labour, she only recommenced it on a larger and more effective scale.

At the time when Bertha and her friends landed in America, some good, benevolent folks, were anxious to establish a home for orphans in Texas, and also to introduce community life to public notice, on a higher plane than that on which it had rested when attempts had resulted in comparative failure. These worthy people found in Signora Georgiana the very woman for the work, they felt it their duty to enter upon without delay, and hearing of Mr. and Miss Bruin, Mrs. Camomile, and Bertha, they naturally fancied that if they could interest in their scheme so highly-gifted and influential a company, as these four people formed, their success was a predetermined certainty.

On the evening of the day following that on which our party made the acquaintance of Signora Georgiana, it happened that she and they were alike invited to a very special and select *sânce*, to be given at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Delmonico French, in Avenue Lafayette. The only invited guests besides the Bruins, Mrs. Camomile, Bertha, and Georgiana, were Mr. and Mrs. Israel Ichabod, and Miss Primrose Newbridge. The medium was the far-famed Mrs. Shipley, concerning whom so much had been published in the *Ripe Banana*, and other periodicals, that her name was literally a household word.

The houses in Lafayette Avenue are large, brown stone structures, four stories above the basement. The *seance* was to be held in the front parlour, a spacious room on the first floor, communicating by means of folding doors with a back parlour of almost equal dimensions.

Mr. and Mrs. French were Spiritualists of the most earnest and uncompromising type. Mr. French was a keen, lynx-eyed mish of the world; shrewd, yet strictly honest in all his business undertakings; hated by sharpers and swindlers wherever he went, but deeply beloved and sincerely respected by all who knew how to appreciate sterling integrity combined with jovial good-nature, and a penetrative intellect which would never rest until it had sifted a matter to the very bottom. His wife was a tall and stately lady, neither proud nor overbearing, and yet having the semblance of *hauteur*, to those who had not yet learnt how tender and true a heart was concealed beneath the ample folds of the rich moire antique and old meehlin lace, she loved so well.

Mr. and Mrs. French were about of an age, somewhere about forty. They had been married just eleven years, after having known each other from childhood; and this union which had been formed between a man and woman, matured in mind and body, quite above the necessity of forming a matrimonial alliance for the sake of filthy lucre or for the promotion of worldly prospects, had proved, as one might well expect it would, an extremely happy and felicitous one.

Child marriages are the curse of India, and they threaten to become the curse of lands not so far remote from home. Little bits of girls marry little bits of boys, and give birth to little bits of sickly, puny children, who die before they've cut their teeth. Then the boy, as he develops into a man, and the girl, as she develops into a woman, discover that they have made a fatal mistake, and the only alternative for the future is to live like cat and dog or sue for a divorce.

Shakespeare, with his usual wisdom, uttered a profound truth when he gave vent to that priceless sentence, which should be enblazoned on the walls of homes and schools, and houses of business wherever there are young people to read it: "A young man married, is a man that's married." Yea! and a young woman that's married, is a young woman that's married; it's true in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred.

Divorces and separations are the scandal of the age, and

while they may be allowable in extreme cases of incompatibility,—Is not prevention better than cure? Whenever we can, let us set in motion forces which will save our youth from rueing the day, when spurred on by a false and demoralizing education, and a misguided and fatal passion, they forged chains for themselves and incurred heavy responsibilities for which they were utterly unprepared, and which they could only support at the sacrifice of all that makes life worth the living.

Mr. and Mrs. Delmonico French, in their bright and happy home, contented with a fulness of content in each other's society, never dreaming of counterparts or affinities elsewhere, never so happy as when together, never tiring of each other's conversation, never thinking any sacrifice too great to ensure each other's comfort; this happy and enviable couple illustrated practically, in its most winsome form, the truth of that sage counsel, which urges every youth and maiden to defer the solemn hour of marriage, till they have learned sufficient of themselves, the world, and each other, to convince them that they will never wish to untie the sacred knot, tied in the marriage covenant.

Mr. and Mrs. French had two children, a boy and a girl. Clarence Percival was eight; Matilda Florence, five. Both were pictures of health and beauty. Sweet in disposition, robust in body, symmetrical in mind and figure, they were the admired of all beholders, and promised to grow up into a man and woman, whose influence for good would reach far and wide across both land and sea.

The little ones were put to bed at 7.30. Their Mama always tucked them up herself, and Papa always stooped over their pretty little cots to give them the good-night kisses, without which they declared they could not go to sleep. They were so sensitive to spirit presence, that they would often run downstairs in the morning, eager to tell their parents all about the spirits who had manifested in the parlour the evening previous.

Talk of fraud being perpetrated in that house, with those children in it! The bare idea is ludicrous. They were both such excellent clairvoyants, that they could tell the contents of any sealed letter placed in their hands by their parents. They could tell exactly the disposition and ailments of a person they have never seen, by simply taking anything he

had worn or handled, between their fingers for a minute. They could see in their dreams exactly what was going on anywhere, where their experiences were likely to be of benefit to themselves or others, and as to being afraid of spirits, why, they would have opened their fine, expressive eyes at you, and wondered what you meant, or if you were crazy, had you suggested to them the faintest thought of fear. Sometimes they would see dark spirits, kindly ministered to by brighter ones, but these visions never gave them any alarm, for so certain were they that angels were ever ready to control all that was evil, and convert it into good, that they loved and trusted the powers of good so perfectly, that evil influences to them were impotent and helpless.

Orthodox Christians ! with your devil, like a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour, accompanied by a long train of hideous imps, who twist their tails round children and drag them into the bottomless pit, and hold them there for ever : ye who allow that God permits spirits of sin and darkness to infest his universe, and lure his children to perdition, while loving friends in spirit are forbidden to protect their earthly charges, they being too far away from earthly cares and loves in heaven. Sceptics ! ye who attribute every mysterious noise to rats and robbers. Nursemaids ! ye who fill your charges ears with frightful tales of bogies and hobgoblins :—you are a nice set to talk about belief in spirits sending children to the madhouse, and the visits of angel friends unfitting them for earthly work, through spirit-communion shattering the nervous system.

Devils, rats and robbers are not agreeable room-mates, and persons of mature age may be pardoned for feeling scared at the prospect of meeting them in the stillness of the night, and in the privacy of their bed-chambers ; but loving friends, who have only “shuffled off this mortal coil,” to quote again from Shakespeare, and who are as harmless as they are well-intentioned : these surely will inspire no dread, until you have poisoned a child’s simple, intuitive faith by your detestable traditions ; or until the sense of crime committed, may cause the possessor of a guilty conscience to fear even his own shadow, and dread the proximity of any being, even his dearest friend : for “conscience makes cowards of us all,” when we have outraged it.

But our readers will not desire any further prolongation of

these reflections, so we must hurry down into the parlour, and take a bird's-eye view of the circle which has now formed, around the extempore cabinet, which has been fitted up by Messrs. French and Bruin for the occasion.

As Mr. Bruin was a stranger, though not a sceptic, it was thought well to ask him to take part in fitting up the room for the *séance*; and as his was one of those genial, sympathetic natures which always give off a fine quality of force, which greatly assists the spirits in their work, he was invited to sit next the curtain, which screened Mrs. Shipley from the sitters' view.

Mrs. Shipley was a delicate little woman, about thirty-five years of age, more or less. She was a lady of culture and refinement, utterly above trickery or anything contemptible or mean: so said everyone who knew her.

The contrary shid Captain Blackball and his ilk, who had once visited a *séance* held at Mr. and Mrs. French's, under guise of devotion to the cause of truth, when Captain Blackball had been caught taking a mask, mustachios, whiskers, and a roll of tarlatan from his pocket; as contrary to every rule of the circle, to which he had agreed, he rushed like a maniac to grab the form which emerged from the aperture, and was about to send to all the papers which publish lies against honest people, without enquiring into the merits of a case at all; a glowing account of an exposure of a celebrated medium. Captain Blackball, caught in the very act of taking the tarlatan and whiskers from his pocket, was unceremoniously ejected from the house; and has ever since styled himself a martyr, because people who have a few brains left in their heads, and a little honour in their hearts, refuse to recognise in him a champion leader of Spiritualism, and defender of all honest mediums and sitters. Fortunately, the Blackball crew is getting itself so nicely exposed, whenever it attempts to perpetrate its heartless mischief, that Blackball Spiritualist is synonymous with rogue, whérer the truth is known.

My dear readers, I have further to inform you, that in the French parlour the lights were completely extinguished at the opening of the circle. Well then, you will say, of course there was deception practised. You will, some of you, doubtless quote from scripture various texts, which tell us that doers of evil hate the light and love the darkness, that their deeds by it may be concealed; while doers of good love

the light and welcome it, because by it their noble deeds are made manifest.

All right, my dear bible students, those texts are excellent in their moral teaching, until your suspicious, grovelling minds pervert them; but putting your interpretations upon them, they are the grossest libels upon the laws of nature ever written. They are, according to your deductions, the most blasphemous insults that can be offered to the great Evolver and Sustainer of the Universe, by whose well-beloved Son you declare they were originally given to mankind. Does not every seed mature in darkness, deep beneath the sod, before its unfoldment allows of its coming in direct contact with the solar ray? Is not every living creature brought forth in the darkness and concealment of the egg or womb, before birth into a world of light is possible? Condemn Spiritualism, because it teaches that germinal or gestative stages of form-development require darkness, and with one fell swoop you demolish all our respect for nature, and make her the child of the devil instead of the child of God.

In materialization, the spirits tell us floating germs, essential particles of life, are attracted from the atmospheres and from the bodies of the sitters, and that these form the bases or nuclei of the forms which we afterwards behold. These life germs are sometimes essential to the well-being of the persons from whom they have been borrowed, in some cases so necessary are they, that they have to be very speedily returned to their respective owners, and then the appearances are quickly seen to fade. In other cases, where there is a great accumulation of power, less is taken from any one than when the power is weaker, and thus sitters and medium are not fatigued to any appreciable degree, even though the forms remain a long time visible before the curtain. Sometimes the power is so great, that cabinets and curtain become superfluities, and then the medium will be brought out by the spirits, after lights have been called for, and a perfect exhibition of several forms at once will be made to all present.

On the evening of which we are now writing, though the company was largely a new one, still the conditions were so delightfully harmonious, that scarcely had the lights been extinguished, when a magnificent luminous apparition drew to itself the enraptured wondering gaze of every sitter. A soft, fleecy cloud of light enveloped, as in a thin gauze veil, a form

of angel purity and inexpressible loveliness. This visitor was known on earth as Miss Victoria De Moranville, the sister of Mrs. French, who was a member of the noble house of De Moranville, a very high and illustrious French family, not far from the throne in days long preceding the revolution.

Shortly, another form appeared, a fine, patriarchal old man, with long skirts and flowing beard, reminding one of pictures of Socrates and Aaron. This spirit was the Greek guide of Mrs. French, through whom he had delivered so profound a course of metaphysical addresses, in some of the most exclusive New York drawing-rooms, the winter before, that not one who had ears to hear, left the room without a knowledge of Spiritual Dynamics, in the light of which the theology of Yale and Harvard appeared but as a rush-light to the orb of day.

These beautiful appearances, though perfectly identified by Mr. and Mrs. French and their old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Ichabod and Miss Primrose who knew them well, were of course not identifiable by any of those with whom our narrative has more immediately to deal, and though much impressed with the grandeur and sublimity of these magnificent demonstrations of spiritual presence, it was but natural that they should each of them feel desirous to see and hear something which should appeal more immediately to themselves.

Their most sanguine hopes were destined to receive a grander fulfilment, than in their most hopeful moments they dared to expect or even to desire. Raps were heard inside the cabinet where Mrs. Shipley was sound asleep, breathing heavily, which soon informed Mr. French that they desired him to light the blue-globed lamp, which the Greek spirit had caused to be made on the plan of one used in his day, in an Athenian temple.

This lamp was of very simple construction, and was composed entirely of blue glass. The light was fixed in the centre; it was pendent from the chandelier, and shed an even, pleasant light, very restful to the eyes, over all parts of the room equally. By this light any one with moderate eyesight could see to read clear type easily; any ordinary 8vo. book could be read without the least difficulty without glasses.

At this point in the proceedings, the piano was played by hands invisible, and as it struck up a well-known air, and played it four times through in perfect time and tune with

great precision, all eyes being fixed upon the key-board of the instrument, which was open and facing out into the room, a hymn was sung, specially composed for such occasions by the spirit Victoria De Moranville.

Immediately on the cessation of the singing, the curtains parted, Mr. Camomile, exactly as he had appeared in life just before his last illness, walked firmly up to his wife (misnamed a widow), and grasping her by the hand and kissing her on the lips, said, in kindly, ringing accents, just like his voice when on earth before illness had weakened it :—

" Clementina, darling : think not that I am dead or ever far from your side. I am your constant companion ; and look at little Gertie, our darling child."

As he spoke, the little Gertie, whom our readers will remember showed herself so beautifully at Lady Armadale's two or three years before, emerged forth under her father's robe, and sitting on her mother's knee, and clasping her round the neck, with little, plump, round arms, lisped out in her 'pretty childish prattle' :

" Gertie wants Mamia to go out West, with Georgie ; and oh ! a lot of friends, and found an orphanage. You'll have such good times if you do."

" Who's Georgie, dearest ? " questioned Mrs. Camomile.

" Why, that kind lady you call Georgiana. She who's so kind to all the little kitties she finds starving."

Sig<sup>n</sup>ora Georgiana could not help springing from her seat with amazement and delight; the evidence was so complete that this spirit had seen her that very afternoon, pick up a little starving kitten in the streets, which some rude boys were tormenting. This kitten she had taken in, warmed and fed, and put to sleep in her work-basket, before she went out of her room on her way to the French's.

These spirits remained talking to Mrs. Camomile for fully seven minutes, and then without moving from their position, they slowly dissolved into thin air, till at length they became wholly invisible.

After this astounding phenomenon, little else could be expected, and as it was growing late, some of the sitters supposed they had seen all they would be likely to get that night. But scarcely had three minutes elapsed, since the dematerialization of the forms described above, when a soft, sweet voice was heard singing in high treble, a fine Italian cavatina.

Louder and clearer sounded the accents of the unseen singer, till at length, standing before Bertha, in long, flowing garments of fine, white silk, stood her mother, arrayed as "Lucia" in the opera, one of her characteristic and most taking *roles* on earth.

She seemed so solid and substantial, the voice was so strong and natural, that for a minute or so Bertha could only open her eyes as wide as she could strain them, and gaze fascinated, spell-bound, upon that human form divine, which seemed to combine the graces of earthly beauty with those subtler charms which belong only to exalted spiritual states of being.

Soon the last sweet notes of the singing died away, and then the spirit spoke.

"Bertha, my darling," said she: "my beloved and only daughter; I have now conducted you unseen through countless trials and dangers, till at this hour I see you standing on a spiritual eminence higher than any to which you have yet attained. Your success in this newer land will be ten times greater than it was across the waters, great though it has been there; but now, for a brief season, you must retire from active public service. Accompanying your four dear friends who are beside you here, you must move on to Texas, and there found a colony which will be one of the first settlements in which the coming of the kingdom of heaven will be realized on earth. Further directions will you receive through direct writing, which will be this night produced on a table in this room. Read and ponder well the words that will there be written, and let your future course be guided in strict accordance with these divine commands. Ever with you to bless and guide, I am now and ever shall be, while yet you linger here, and after you have joined me in the spheres, your guardian spirit, she who was on earth your mother."

The beautiful form, passing entirely round the circle, waving its snowy hands in benediction, at length retired, and the room was wrapped in a stillness that could be felt.

During this unearthly calm, a scratching, as of some one writing, was heard inside a locked writing-table, in one corner of the room. Nothing was to be seen, but the sound continued for the space of half-an-hour, rapidly and incessantly, as though some one were writing against time.

The sound at length completely died away, lights were called for, and when the chandelier was all ablaze, Mrs. Shipley walked out into the room, rubbing her eyes. All then partook of refreshments, and returned to their respective homes, there to talk far into the night of all they had heard and seen.



## CHAPTER XXX.

## THE COLONY IN TEXAS.

As soon as the company had dispersed, Mr. and Mrs. French went directly to their *escretoire*, to see if anything unusual had taken place within it.

Possibly some people who have read our last chapter, will give the credit of the mysterious noises to a mouse, but if a mouse were the cause of the filling of sixteen sheets of note-paper in half-an-hour, with perfectly legible instructions, giving ample directions for the foundation of a Spiritual Colony in Texas, which has long ere this turned out to be a most gratifying success and a source of priceless blessing to multitudes, mice must be endowed with powers of mind and soul, entitling them to rank before, not behind, ourselves in the scale of intellectual being.

It is the fashion of this materialistic age, to attribute everything divine to mice, or rats, or devils. Even science prefers old fossils to the living, sentient human soul; probably because the soul is so far beyond it, that it is practically lost to it.

But to resume our task as historian, it now becomes our pleasing duty to enter somewhat into particulars concerning this new Texan Colony, which, under the management of a wise and noble band of spirits, aided by a most efficient staff of workers in the physical frame, has been for some years an immense credit to the Spiritualists of America.

Robert Owen, and his son, Robert Dale Owen, both earnest Spiritualists, were also Communists; and it is well known, that, while neither of them were in any sense orthodox, they were nevertheless sincere admirers of those sublime New Testament ethics, which have no superiors, and we have never found their equals in the literature of the world.

A would-be philosopher has written a readable treatise, entitled "The Ethics of Spiritualism," in which he characterizes the "Golden Rule" as the "old," and his own new-fangled commandment, "Do all for others," the "new." If the meaning of the writer is, that unalloyed benevolence,

pure unselfishness, is the highest morality, then we agree with him *in toto*; but that doctrine is not new; it is older than the days of Jesus, and can easily be traced back to the time of Sakya Muni Gautama, according to Edwin Arnold, the last of the Buddhas, who appeared in Asia between 500 and 600 B.C.

Altruism is divine in theory and in practice, but as ordinarily presented to the nineteenth century, it is incomplete as a system of ethics. It lacks that clear and subtle analysis of the real wants of man, which is indispensable to the demonstration of a practical system of religion or morality; as the question at once arises: If I am to do "all for others," what is the all that I am to do?" We take it that the Altruist really means: I am to do all for my fellow human being, that can conduce to his well-being, regardless of the consequences of such action upon myself.

Buddha did this, Jesus did this, and multitudes of men and women unknown to fame did this; to say nothing of Grace Darling, and hundreds of other heroines and heroes, the record of whose sublime unselfishness makes history glorious.

The old Golden Rule in its two-fold form: Arabic, "Thou shalt feel towards others as thou desirest others to feel towards thee;" Galilean, "Thou shalt do unto others as thou wouldest that others should do unto thee," embodies the highest Altruism, and at the same time honours the natural instinct of self-preservation, which if not obeyed, places man in ignorance of what is really best for others.

All life is experimental, until the soul has completely subdued matter. Every experience of individual life teaches the individual some lesson concerning the needs of society at large. By a careful and critical analysis of what is really best for the unit, we shall discover what is best for the mass; and though the welfare of the mass should be regarded by us as of more importance than our own individual welfare, to do what really is best for others, is necessarily to do exactly what we intelligently wish done to ourselves, and feeling this proposition to be self-evident, we declare unselfishness and the instinct of self-preservation were never unreconciled.

The Arabians were a singularly sensitive and mediumistic people. They knew in common with the Oriental Magi, at large, the substantial and positive nature of thought; and

when they stated in their highest rule of virtue, the need of right feeling, they sentimentally and actually, in the domain of spirit, taught precisely what Jesus translated into the sphere of action. Right feeling is the root, right acting and speaking, the leaves and fruit, of a good tree. A person whose acts and words are kindly, but whose thoughts are sour, is like a tree with no root stuck into the ground, and adorned with artificial fruits and flowers, so cleverly manufactured that they resemble reality so nearly, that unless we are hungry and attempt to eat the fruit, we cannot discover how spurious it is; but in our hour of need, it fails us utterly.

The spirit-communications just referred to, detailed at considerable length and with great clearness the vital elements of success in a projected colony, and went on to clearly point out the causes of failure in such communistic settlements as have from time to time aroused public interest, only to disappoint the expectations of the over-sanguine, by the speedy decadence of what promised to flourish for centuries. Reasons for the failure of such colonies, were ably and powerfully given, and it was stated emphatically, that under the guidance of some wise, old Greek philosopher, in the sphere of Plato, with the Owens, father and son, and many other philanthropists known to history, John Howard among the number, the new colony was to be started.

Among causes of failure in communistic settlements, were assigned the following: Firstly, personal ambition and inordinate selfishness, on the part of persons desirous of taking advantage of community life, that they might support themselves at the expense of their fellow communists. Secondly, insufficient discrimination in the selection of persons to form the community, and want of proper classification of duties assigned to each. Thirdly, inharmony, arising from a lack of the right elements to make one large household out of a number of smaller households, and too little room being made for privacy in home life, for those who desire to live privately, and yet add to the general wealth and reap the results of the general industry.

The land selected for the new settlement covered 5,000 acres of the best land in Texas, and this was not purchased: it was deeded by the Government to the applicants, who promised so to improve it, that it should be a source of good to the nation for all time to come. The persons who were to

erect the buildings, having first thoroughly cleared and drained the ground, were a company of honest, industrious workmen, who went out with a band of overseers and master-builders, at the head of whom was a first class architect. All these people intended to remain as members of the community, after they got there, but each family was distinct in itself, whenever persons were married and had children; single persons and those married without offspring, did not as a rule desire private dwellings.

Mr. and Miss Bruin were to be superintendent and matron of the entire educational establishments; Mr. Bruin was also to be head-master of the adult school, and pastor of the Free Church (strictly unsectarian), which was to occupy a prominent place on the grounds, and be a centre of anthropological knowledge, rather than a seminary for the dispensing of dogmatic theology.

Bertha and Signora Georgiana were to take charge of the musical departments of instruction. In addition to these duties devolving upon both ladies equally, Bertha was to occupy the desk at the church, alternately with Mr. Bruin, conduct classes for giving spiritual instruction from her guides, and generally act as prophetess for the community.

Signora Georgiana was to instruct the smallest of the children in her own inimitable way, and act as nurse and mother to the little foundlings who were eagerly welcomed to the establishments, which were true homes for the little ones. But though instruction was given to the children collectively, still there was ample provision made for the individualization of children into families and groups; and as many persons who joined the colony, were fond of children and had had experience with them, though they at present had none of their own to tend, the paternal and maternal instincts of those who had never born children or who having born them had been bereaved through their passing to spirit-life, or whose children had grown up and settled elsewhere, leaving the home nest empty, were amply provided with objects on which to bestow their affection, thereby doing away with all State interference, and the obnoxious practice of endowing and supporting public institutions, to do the work by proxy which can only be done effectually by fatherly and motherly men and women, who labour for love not for emolument.

The putting of children in the care of hirelings, is a great

error. Boarding-schools are nurseries of vice rather than of virtue, as no one who takes children in order to make a living by training them, can supply the parent's place. Of course if the parents are worse than the school-masters and mistresses, in such cases the comparatively good school may have a decided advantage over the decidedly bad home; but whenever and wherever practicable, home influence and training are essential to the rounding out of the real nature of children.

The motto of the educational efforts put forth in this Texan home, was the old proverbial one, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The great mistake made by too many instructors, is, that they endeavour to train up children in the way they *think* they should go, and not in the way in which nature intends them to go. Physicians, to be really healers of the sick, must be born to minister to the needs of minds and frames diseased. Ministers of religion, to be such in reality, must be born with spiritual gifts enabling them to make a spiritual revelation to their less-favoured brethren. Lawyers, barristers and judges, to fill their responsible places as the administrators of justice, must be born to mete out equity. So with the handcraftsman and the domestic servant, he and she, as well as they who occupy highest seats in Parliament or Congress, cannot truly serve the world faithfully and well, unless nature has cut them out to work in their menial sphere, as nobly and intelligently as the highest in rank and station may be useful in a more noted and conspicuous place.

The new colony was to be eminently hygienic in all its arrangements, but there was to be no one-sidedness or pedantry about the provision made for either the mental or bodily wants of the colonists. Vegetarianism was not enforced, but the free consumption of animal food was checked whenever practicable. Children were never brought up to crave meat, and thus as the community was quite extensively made up of children, the amount of animal food consumed was at a minimum.

Bertha's guides reasoned very closely and carefully on the subject, during a series of lectures they delivered in New York, while the preliminary work was being done in Texas, before the colonists who were not artizans could be called out and find a place ready for them when they reached their journey's end. While speaking of food, we will here insert

a few paragraphs from a lecture delivered on "Food, and its influence on the human system, mind, and morals." The guides of the fair lecturer, in the course of a profound, analytic, and scientific speech, gave utterance to the following very useful, plain and practical suggestions :—

"To all who advocate Vegetarianism on humanitarian grounds, we can only say : God speed you in your work of appealing to the finest and sweetest susceptibilities of human nature. Your aversion to inflict suffering upon any sentient creature, is an evidence of rare spiritual attainment, if it spring really from motives of benevolence ; and when it simply springs from motives of undiscriminating good nature, though good in a lesser degree, it is nevertheless laudable, and deserves recognition and respect. But treating our subject scientifically rather than sentimentally, we beg to lay before you, as the result of much thought and experiment, the following conclusions. Though Vegetarians are doubtless pretty accurate, speaking statistically, statistics are often extremely misleading ; for while they may describe accurately the percentage of absolutely nutritious particles in a given substance, all nutrition as applied to the human system is relative, and it depends exactly upon the state of the person's mind and body, who partakes of food, as to how far absolutely nutritive elements are relatively nutritious in his case. Even poisons themselves are valuable in certain instances, not as foods but as decomposers and dissolvers of foreign substances in the blood, which impede circulation and prevent the proper assimilation of nutritive foods. It is stated that that vegetable (the carrot), which is supposed to be free from poison, is one of the least valuable as an article of human diet ; and it is also a well-attested fact in every household, that what makes one person seriously ill accomplishes another's recovery. If the absolute instead of the relative value of food is considered as applicable to every constitution, then facts falsify facts, and this is an impossibility ; but regarding nutrition relatively, we are forced to admit that only such foods as supply to the partaker the largest amount of nutrition possible, owing to their adaptability to his organism, can in his case be correctly included in that "daily bread," for which he should both work and pray. Long habits of flesh-eating have so accustomed the system to extracting much of its nourishment from flesh, that unless you wish for a severe illness, perhaps utter

prostration of the entire frame and nervous system, if you are at all advanced in years, we advise you to limit your flesh allowance as much as possible, reducing the quantity of meat of which you partake by degrees, till at length you may have accustomed your system to draw all it needs from fruits, vegetables, and farinacea. Fruits and vegetables, however, though they supply all the necessary phosphates to the system, if the system be in perfect health; though they supply also all needed saline and saccharine elements, if the system be in health; in various stages of morbidity and inactivity of the liver, they induce flatulence. Where flatulence is common, much fish should be avoided. Food should, at all times be thoroughly cooked, and a small quantity of meat, taken, we may say, medicinally, is often necessary. The time will come when not an animal will be slaughtered for food; the time will come when the policeman's and the soldier's occupation will be completely gone; and while the goal is certainly nearer the vegetarian's than the flesh-eater's ideal, we must not try to force progress, and thus induce a relapse. The future is in the hands of your children; see to it that they are, as far as possible, acclimatized to the best conditions of life; but carefully watch every tendency, and suppress excessive development, by making direct efforts to stimulate into active exercise those organs which are depressed. Speaking mentally and morally, we should decide unequivocally, that as the body of the spirit is its instrument, the spirit is dwarfed or assisted in expression in precise ratio as the body is injured or upbuilt. Absolute intelligence, absolute morality, appertaining to the spirit only, cannot be affected by temporal advantages or disadvantages, for its creation or destruction. An instrument does not constitute the performer upon it, a musician. At the same time, the best musician in the world cannot display his genius without a perfectly-attuned instrument. By measure, as the body is perfect, will the manifestation of the indwelling spirit be harmonious. Proportionately with the disease of the body, will be the frailty of spiritual expression. As a rule, persons who live very simply are more sensitive to spiritual sights and sounds, more likely to receive primal impressions from the soul itself, than those whose habits are grosser, and whose bodies are consequently more adipose than ethereal. But as oversensitiveness in some society is a catastrophe rather than a

desideratum, experience must decide for you what course is best for you individually to pursue."

Of course, so large an enterprise as this Texan colony, was not a flourishing success from a financial point of view; immediately it was started. Large sums of money were invested by kind and energetic friends, who were not expecting to make money out of the enterprise, but were quite willing to sink some of their surplus funds for the general good. Nevertheless, after a few years, the enterprise became not only thoroughly self-supporting, but highly renumerative to those who had laboured for its advancement.

The plan adopted for transacting business was strictly democratic and co-operative. Every member of the fraternity was a brother or sister. All shared alike: every one gave to the extent of his or her ability, either in money or labour. Two or three old people, who were very wealthy but too infirm to work, threw in their entire incomes to the general good, though they bequeathed their principal to their children, who were not disposed to enter upon community life. Labour and capital were practically ignored. Everyone who joined understood that there were to be no drones in the hive, and though at first petty bickerings could not be completely avoided, very soon the few malcontents withdrew, at the request of the majority of the members.

There was no officering of the affair by a few bombastic individuals, who elected themselves or bribed others to elect them. The government was purely democratic; each member possessed equal rights and privileges. But there are some people naturally constituted to take the lead anywhere: they are born to rule, while others are born to serve. These rulers have an authority, but it is not the authority of impudent self-assertion, or dogmatic stickling for orthodox modes of legislation.

Mr. Bruin was unanimously requested to be president of the entire association. He was verily a father of the people, because of his peculiar abilities, his great insight into character, his efficient managerial capacities, and above all, his wise and tender concern for the welfare of all whose interests were in any way committed to his charge. Mr. Bruin and his sister were together the life and soul of the executive.

Bertha was admirably fitted to fill the role of spiritual teacher, and her musical talent was a never-ending source of

inspiration and delight; but she was not fit to be a business woman, on account of her extreme sensitiveness and natural indisposition to leave her spiritual work to serve tables. Yet she did serve tables, frequently and admirably. She was an excellent cook and a capital waitress, and whenever those who were regularly occupied in these duties, were unwell or tired, or in any way pressed for time, she would most generously offer to help them in their labours, and frequently she would do all their work, and indeed the hardest part of the work, so quickly and easily, and then change her dress and go at once to the lecture-room to deliver a discourse, that many persons came to the conclusion that in her case, at least, spirits could give strength for manual as well as intellectual labour; which in many instances, no doubt they do, and that when least we realize their presence.

Some people have the idea that only in the great things of life, spirits play an active part. Some think that only on questions directly spiritual, are they competent to offer an opinion. Such ideas are eminently erroneous. Spirits who have lived on earth and done business as mortals, and who from the spirit side of life are directing a movement on earth which needs able financing, are more able than mortals to conduct the outward phases of their work. Of course it is not to be expected that wise and elevated spirits will treat subjects from the point of view of the Wall Street stock-broker.

Those people who open "Spiritual Temples" as they would open shops, who deal in mediumship as they would in material merchandise, who care only for what brings the most custom to their stalls in the market place;—these will no doubt sneer at the idea of a business enterprise being successfully conducted under the governorship of the spirit-world, and these objectors have some show of reason on their side, and can bring forward at least two very plausible arguments to support their premises: First, say they, spirits of a high and holy order do not care to concern themselves with earthly business; they have higher occupations to engage their time and energy; they will not stoop to count coins and make estimates of material expenditure, and attend to the details of work in this mundane sphere.

Our positive and unequivocal answer to those objectors, who raise these first objections is, there can be no work in the

universe morally higher than that which is essential to the highest development of human nature. No angels or archangels can be engaged in loftier pursuits than those which tend to awaken the latent divinity within man, and lead up to that glorious era when injustice, oppression and war will be banished for ever from our planet.

Souls on Jupiter, Saturn, or some of the other older and more progressed planets, may be beyond the need of making provision for such material wants as we experience on earth, and those who have conquered every earthly temptation and have attained to the matchless glories of the Sun-sphere, may be no longer directly concerned with the carking cares incident to this lower earth; but no spirit, however liberated himself from material trammels, can be too exalted, too pure, too holy, to bend down as an angel messenger to those who need his guidance, and can be uplifted by the strong arm of his counsel and strength.

Angelo and Raphael may be discerned by the perceptions of a quickened spirit, directing the brush of some unknown and youthful artist, in an out-of-the-way garret, even in a London slum; Mozart and Handel may be found directing the fingers or the pen of some unlettered child, who is yet to startle the world with music transcending the sublimest strains which have ever yet been heard in the cathedrals or opera-houses of earth; and as the bird cannot sing unless it be fed, as the needs of outward life must be supplied by material means, till such time as these needs shall be outgrown; as the kingdom of heaven can never be set up on earth, till the worship of Mammon be overthrown, and the altars of the golden calf lie in ruins; as the wise and proper use of material means, is essential to the carrying out of all spiritual projects on earth; as justice, honour, integrity, love, wisdom, mercy, in short, every virtue, is required to be put in active exercise before the gold of this world can be fashioned into a living temple of the spirit,—it is never beneath the dignity of the highest souls, to devise plans and superintend operations for the employment of the wealth of the globe, in a just and righteous cause. Because the work itself is spiritual; because the aims are pure and high; because the end is noble, and the means employed are just; because the aspirations of the builders are not for self-aggrandizement, but for the good of humanity: for these reasons, angels officer

material work, and constitute unseen committees for the building and sustaining of the work of *true* spiritual temples on the earth.

The second objection is this: Many persons have followed spirits, and been led astray. Our answer to this objection shall be very brief and pithy: Many, many people have gone to the spirits for information as to how they might become rich with little or no exertion on their part. They have coveted material splendour, and have sought for the gratification of selfish ambition. These fools have been answered according to their folly. Earth-bound themselves, they have communed with earth-bound spirits, and these are not wise enough to give sage counsel, even though they be not malicious enough to wilfully give bad counsel. The only safe course is to aspire to do good unselfishly, then you attract the wise, the loving, the celestial from the realms of spirit.



## CHAPTER XXXI.

## CONCLUSION.

THOUGH our story is not half told, we have already exceeded our space, and must content ourselves with promising our readers another volume of Bertha's experiences, if this humble effort so far meet with public recognition, as to constitute a call for another selection from Bertha's chequered and most instructive book of remembrance.

Before bidding our kind readers adieu, and throwing out our little venture upon the ocean of public sympathy and scorn,—where the sweet waters of intelligent and loving acceptance of whatever appeals to human sense of right, are strangely mingled with the hiss and sneer of the jealous, the captious, and those who are so afraid that the world knows of their personal delinquencies, that they are constrained by force of conscience to put on every ugly cap which an author who knew not of their existence could not purposely have manufactured for their heads,—we will just take one glance at some of the more prominent characters, whom we have introduced into our tale, and see how the years have gone with those who figured so prominently at the outset of Bertha's public career.

It is now fourteen years since we met Bertha, at Knaresbrook, a charming girl of sixteen summers. Time has not dealt unkindly with her, though her life has been neither an easy nor an uneventful one. She is now a beautiful woman of thirty. Her hair is still as golden and luxuriant as when we first met her in the Only's garden; her eyes are still as deep and lustrous, and as azure as of old; her figure has rounded and developed into one of singular symmetry and grace. She is both a woman and a child. Her complexion is as pure and fresh as it was in her girlhood, and as innocent of rouge, or burnt cork, or powder, or any of those subterfuges to which the devotees of fashion resort, that with base counterfeit they may induce their neighbours to believe that their hair is so long they can sit upon it, and so thick that it would

make ropes surpassing in strength those made in Carthage of old, from the flowing tresses the Carthaginian women so freely sacrificed, in their last desperate attempt to save their native homes from the ruthless Roman invader; that their complexion is so fair, that it rivals the lily and the rose; that they are so young that they cannot remember what happened fifteen years ago; that they have refused twenty good offers of marriage, when everybody knows that they only had one, and that was even below their dignity to accept. But their neighbours do the same as they do: their hair and their teeth are bought, their figures and their complexions are bought, their age is exaggerated and not underrated by Mrs. Grundy, wherever they may go, and their immaculate reputations are the scoff and jeer of every club-room, while they, pretending to the imitation of Christ, who condemned not even the woman taken in the very act of adultery, refuse to believe any good, and readily accredit all the evil, which is circulated of their neighbours.

Bertha was universally scandalized, and why? Because her life was pure, and the world will never forgive you if you do not participate in its vices; and then, when you are on the verge of discovery, attribute your sins to others, and blacken the fair fame of an innocent party, to turn the attention of detectives away from yourself.

The hero of the Gospels had no guilt to conceal, no adulteries and fornications of his own to dread appearing in solemn judgment before him in the light of day. He told no lies, he defrauded no man of his dues, and thus he never found it needful to tell his followers that the persons with whom he associated were blacklegs and swindlers, as he passed through the midst of sorrowing and suffering humanity, uncontaminated with the world's guilt, and thus untormented with the stings of an accusing conscience.

Bertha laid no claim to be either a heroine or a saint. She never attained to that Christ-like humility, which no one reaches on earth who ever parades it, or tells others it is his. She never entirely subdued her impetuous feelings, or kept the hot flush of anger from mounting to her brow, when she was insulted and accused of the crimes perpetrated by those who were too cowardly to bear their own burdens, and thus endeavoured to sully her ermine robes with the mud they tried in vain to effectually brush off their sable. Bertha, even

at thirty, was a passionate, impulsive young woman, with indomitable courage, and invincible strength of will. The honest loved her, wherever she went; the false feared her, and, therefore, hated her. Her powers as a speaker, an actress, a vocalist, increased rather than diminished with the years. Her splendid talents, her perfect grace and dignity of bearing and utterance, her beauty of form and figure, all made her the idol of the multitude, who could appreciate high art; and the target at which the barbed arrows of calumny and scorn were flung, by those aspirants to fame, who made cheek to do duty for talent, insolence for ability, and mock modesty for virtue.

A young, unmarried woman, courted for her voice, her beauty, her manifold gifts, graces, and accomplishments, though pure as ice and chaste as marble, could not expect to escape society's detractions, and the disgusting imputations of those, whose own lives were black as the hole of Calcutta, while they appeared in society, clad in the hypocritical sanctimoniousness ever assumed by those who dare to play no other part in life but that of Pharisee, religious humbug, or whitened sepulchre.

Strange to say, though Bertha had received more than twenty offers of marriage in the past ten years, some of them from men whom princesses would hesitate before refusing she could not bring herself to accept any one of them.

A millionaire, owning vast estates in Virginia, worth at least £5,000,000, was calmly and coldly refused, when he pressed his suit, with the simple words:—

"You do me great honour, Sir, in offering me your hand and heart; but, as I do not love you, I dare not sell my soul for gold."

He was young, handsome, of excellent family, but she could not love him, and she told him so, plainly and decisively, and her decision was irrevocable.

Nothing in her eyes was so hateful as a *marriage de convenance*. She would neither accede to the entreaties of those who told her to marry for money, nor of those lesser social sinners, who modify this detestable commandment by urging their young friends not to marry for money, but to be sure and marry where it is. To Bertha, marriage which was stained with mercenary motive, was prostitution, viler than

that which is the crying shame and public disgrace of our boasted civilization.

"Better," said she, when in conversation on the subject of matrimony with the Hon. Mr. Theodosius Sincat (*neé* Clarissa Only), "openly advertise your shame, and let the world know what you are, than veiled in silk and tulle and orange blossoms, kneel at the marriage altar, and there promise to love and honour the man or woman you despise, because your purse is empty, and your tastes are costly, and his wealth, or hers, will pay for the gilded mask, with which in the eyes of man, though never before God, the world of spirits, or your own soul, you cloak the secret sin, which is none the less an abomination in the sight of heaven, because you wash your sullied hands in perfumed rose-water, and adorn your shame with the jewels purchased with the price of a life-long infidelity. Better, a thousand times, appear what you are, sinner though you be, and let society see you in your true colours, how dark soever they may be, than under cover of the laws of God and man, which you have shamelessly outraged while pretending to obey, steep your spirit in that blackest of all black dyes, the inky stream of hypocrisy."

Bertha's views on marriage were so ultra, so radical, so rabid and immoral, Mrs. Sincat styled them, that the Hon. Theodosius absolutely forbade his wife from associating with "that creature" Bertha, and yet he had committed bigamy, and she had a lover outside her husband, but they gave costly dinners and suppers, they wore the costliest of gems, while he beat his wife in fits of delirium tremens, and she gave her husband's money to her lover on the very day when they knelt together at the altar rails at St. Athanasius', in Maxwell Avenue, New York, and received that symbol of devotedness to Christ, with which the "religious world" strives in vain to cheat the devil of his due, and slip into heaven, through that priestly absolution which they have bought with the lie of mock penitence on their lips, and the gold which has just purchased new candelabra for the chancel.

The colony at Texas could not monopolize Bertha's time and energy. Invisible directors called her out, again and again, from her comparative retirement in those fair vales of Texas, to do battle with the outer world, and bear witness to the truth in the great Babylon of the modern world.

Everywhere she went, she was the feted darling of the *élite* of the very best society.

Her marvellous gifts, and her telling beauty, made for her hosts of friends and admirers, and amid it all she never lost her bloom of youth, or her maiden purity. She was in the world, and of it, and yet she soared above it. She loved its beauty and its song, and joined in all its innocent pastimes and amusements, but there throbbed within her breast a longing for some purer joys than earth could give; and at times a pleading expectancy, like the prayer of a hope long deferred, which neither years nor denial can ever quench, gave to her eyes a preternatural brilliancy, and suffused her damask cheek with the pink blush of the fresh blown rose.

Evidently her cup of happiness was not yet full. Her brother's loss had never been forgotten; his place, no other mortal man could fill; and the place left vacant when her idol was rudely taken from its shrine in her outward life, though nothing could tear it from her heart, could not be supplied by any of those kind and heavenly counsellors, who from the Summer-land inspired and blest her life.

The Onlys had left England long ago. Mrs. Theodosius Sincat, shortly after her marriage five years previously, had accompanied her rich but unloved husband to New York. Mrs. Only, and her daughter Addie, yet unmarried, had quickly joined them, and here they were in a splendid brown stone mansion, on Maxwell Avenue, combining Ritualism and frivolity, just as of old, when the world went less easily with them, in their humbler English home at Knaresbrook.

Easter was again approaching, and a soprano of rare compass and singular purity of voice, was urgently needed to complete the quartette of soloists at S. Athanasius', who with a chorus of fifty picked voices in the gallery, and fifty surpliced men and boys in the chancel, were to render the Easter celebration peculiarly magnificent this year; as it was not only the Easter festival, but the Jubilee of the Church, which fell just at this season.

By one of those strange coincidences, which often bring together for the last time on earth, just before the passing to the unseen life of some of them, those whose destinies were linked in the past, it happened that Madame Fandango Assoretta and Signor Desolato Infuriori had been engaged as contralto and tenor of the Athanasius festival quartette.

Time had dealt fairly well, but not over leniently, with these two celebrated singers. Madame Assoretta was by this time a buxom woman over forty; striving in vain, by every artifice known to fashion, to appear twenty-five. It mattered little to her that her own hair was rather scanty, and her teeth all gone; her *coiffeurs* were more elaborate than ever, and her teeth were shimmering, gleaming rows of whitest pearls. Her face needed more making up than formerly, and she avoided daylight and courted gaslight rather more than in years gone by. Her voice had suffered more seriously, and though she nominally kept up her prices, and hired her *claque* to applaud her, and paid her masculine friends to buy her flowers, and send them up with gilt-edged cards, faced with the names of illustrious persons who had given orders for a plate to some engravers with whom Madame Assoretta's acquaintances were on terms of friendship, she was obliged to confess, even to herself, that her voice was not quite what it used to be; and this acknowledgment had at least one salutary effect upon her, in that it led her to take less of those stimulants, which had impaired her singing powers, and led her to be more generally careful and regular in her mode of life.

Signor Infuriori was much the same as when we first met him. He was, if possible, vainer than ever of those charms, which he feared were beginning to slip away from him for ever. His valet found him increasingly irritable and exacting. His curls were more carefully studied, and his moustache more elaborately waxed and curled than ever. At thirty-eight he was certainly a very handsome, though slightly *passé* man. His dissipations had not helped him to retain his youth; but his voice was as fine as ever, while Vesuviano Ethani, the basso, had developed into a gross, sensual man of fifty, with a voice of thunder, and manners distinguished for their boorishness, more than for their refinement. But he was a famous *artiste*, and his vulgarities were overlooked on the score of his eminent musical abilities.

Dr. Kneesswell had been appointed organist at S. Athansius', at a fabulous salary, and he, Bertha's old friend and champion, hearing his former *protégé* was in New York, and accessible, determined to secure her services, as the soprano who had been recommended to him, had written to cancel her engagement, under plea of indisposition; really because she had a better offer elsewhere, and the celebrated *Mus. Doc.* knew of

no one so eminently qualified to take the difficult soprano solos, as his old friend Bertha.

The morning service on Easter Day passed off triumphantly; even Assoretta was so far inspired with the glorious harmonies, that she sang as she had never sung before. Bertha outdid herself in every effort. High C she dwelt upon, and trilled in the *Kyrie Eleison*, as even La Diva, with her 4,000 dollars nightly, could not, were she offered the diadem of the world.

Solemn Vespers were to be sung at 4 o'clock. At 2.30, Signor Infuriori was taken seriously ill, so sick that he could not leave his room. He had eaten some salmon salad for his dinner, and the fish was poisoned, no one knew how. What was to be done for the vesper service? Dr. Kneeswell became frantic with excitement; the church was crammed, the procession filed in and filled the chancel, the organ pealed forth a glorious prelude, and the first Psalm was chanted, still there was no tenor, and in a few minutes Rossi's *Magnificat*, which hundreds had come purposely to hear, must be sung, and the tenor solo were, in this glorious composition, the feature of the service.

As the last Psalm was being chanted, Bertha seemed to swoon. She turned from red to white, and white to red. Her music dropped from her hand, and falling over the front of the gallery, fell on the head of a gentleman seated immediately below. Feeling sure it belonged in the organ-loft, he edged his way with difficulty through the standing crowd, and ascended to the singing gallery, with the piece of music in his hand, when, lo! who was there, but his own beloved sister, Bertha; she whom he had not seen for twelve long years.

Radiant with health, in the prime of early manhood, Signor Victor Vulpi, just returned from a long sojourn in New Zealand, where life had used him very kindly, encountered his long-lost sister.

With a cry of joy she could not suppress, though it was in church, and there were over fifty singers in the gallery, she threw herself into her brother's arms, and wept as a child weeps, when after long absence from a tender mother, it lies once again in peace and trusting love upon the fond, maternal breast.

Dr. Kneeswell thanked heaven more fervently than he

usually said his prayers, for sending, in the very nick of time, just the very person who, before all others, could render Rossini's *Magnificat*, with his sister's aid, in such a style as to make the church at which he played, famous for all time for the extraordinary excellence of its singing.

The situation was hurriedly explained to Signor Vulpi, who, never in better voice in his life, sang as we might imagine an angel singing before the gate of heaven, if song could open wide those pearly gates which harmony of soul alone uncloses.

Bertha's and Victor's voices rose and fell together, as one vast concourse of exquisite, harmonious sound. Such perfect blending of tone was pronounced matchless, by the critics. The papers were full of it on Easter Monday; and thus sang out heroine and hero on their last Sunday on the earth.



It is the Wednesday following. Donizetti's Theatre is crowded to excess. A novel entertainment is in progress: a Spiritualistic Play, written by Victor, acted out by him and Bertha to a house crowded from orchestra to gallery, with the greatest guns of the city.

The Play is in three acts. The first introduces a lovely, forlorn young maiden, in a dreary forest, far from shelter, home and friends. A dark-visaged man approaches, and taking advantage of her unprotected innocence, he strives to induce her to throw in her lot with his, and reign as queen over one of those gilded dens of infamy, where pure and lovely girls are drawn into a vortex of crime, that they may constitute bait to attract the gilded youths, who are soon led by the united influence of champagne and the smiles of sylphs, to squander their father's money, in addition to their own allowances, and the money they borrow of the money-lenders, at the gaming table. The heroine in the Play is on the very point of yielding, by force of fear and hunger, to her tempter, when the stage is suddenly illuminated with a bright,

soft light, stealing in from no one can detect where. The light assumes a human form, and gradually becomes more and more distinct, until at length there stands beside the affrighted girl, her angel mother. Slowly and gently she bears her daughter in her arms, to a cottage on the heath. Her pursuer falls heavily to the earth, as though stricken dead with such unearthly brightness, though he soon awakes to find his prey departed, and no clue to her whereabouts left, that he may track her to her place of refuge.

Bertha played the part of heroine. Her brother did not appear till the second act, when we find her in a gorgeous drawing-room, surrounded by every luxury, as the adopted daughter of the Countess de la Maude Marie. The Countess, who is an eminently worldly woman, sees no means of redeeming her forfeited estates, but by marrying her adopted daughter to the man who has taken them in payment of her debts. He is a coarse, brutal Count, of Russian pedigree, and though enamoured of her beauty, he has no genuine love or honour to bestow upon the fair, young girl, who bears the euphonious name of Asphodela de Monte Corezzino. Tears and protestations are all in vain, the Countess insists that Asphodela shall marry the Count, and the second act closes amid the tears and prayers of the adopted daughter, and the angry insistence of the cruel foster-mother.

The third act takes us into the Cathedral at Milan. The organ is pealing forth the strains, which are to die away in silence only when the Count and Asphodela are man and wife; but ere the mystic words are spoken, which bind by law of man, multitudes whom God never has united, and never will unite—for the human ceremony, when it is not the outer sign of the union of hearts, is the basest and cruellest of mockeries,—the angel again appears from over the high altar, gleaming with a thousand lighted candles, and gorgeous with a hundred magnificent bouquets, and moving towards the weeping girl, who has been forced to church in spite of prayers and tears, unheeded, which by their fervour and intensity should have melted any heart not quite a stone, gently raises her above the heads of priest and people, and floats with Asphodela in her arms, out through one of the open windows near the roof, bearing her away from the astonished multitude, who are awe-struck with this, to them, supernatural intervention of Providence.

Away from the shameless act of desecration, whereby both Church and State bind in the bonds of hate and loathing, two lives which should never be bound at all, unless by pure and constant love. Away to some peaceful sylvan shades, where a company of colonists are struggling for their daily bread, in a new and untried land ; there she is instated by the angel director of the little band of fearless workers, as the instrument in the hands of heaven to teach them how to govern this new estate ; upon a pattern given from the spirit-world.

But, hark ! what is that fierce, awful cry that rends the air, and produces a panic of consternation among the densely-packed audience ? Donizetti's theatre is on fire ! The illumination was not efficiently superintended ; the wood-work behind the stage is burning ; the stage itself is in flames ; and Victor, who is seated at the organ behind the scenes, falls suddenly down into the cellar beneath, and is dead instantly, with the effects of the blow !

Cut off in the midst of his age, so young, so talented, so beautiful ; and yet how merciful the ordination of mysterious heaven, which cut short the earthly career thus early, of one who would sooner have endured mortal anguish, than lived to lose his beauty or his voice.

Undisturbed in its beauty, in no way disfigured by its fall, the lovely form is raised by tender hands, and placed upon a temporary bier. The fire is extinguished by this time ; the firemen have done their duty bravely, and won new laurels by their promptitude, which has saved the life of every other person in that vast assembly, but this one fresh, young life, which seemed securer in its strength than almost any other life in that immense concourse of human beings.

Bertha is quite unhurt ; the fire has not even singed her dress. She looks once upon the marble features of her brother, stoops forward to imprint one kiss upon that regal brow, and without a word, a sigh, a tear, she falls forward on to her beloved dead, an inanimate corpse.

Her mother died of heart disease before her. The doctors declare the daughter died of the same complaint ; and there they lie together, in the embrace of death. Who shall dare to say, not alive together, in that realm of spirit, where love is the only bond, and hatred the only barrier.

The city mourns for her fallen stars. Many are the tears shed over the grave that holds them both ; and over their

remains is a simple stone, and many flowers in Maplewood Cemetery, and these words from the grand old Hebrew Bible :—

“THEY WERE LOVELY AND BEAUTIFUL IN THEIR LIVES,  
*and in Their Death they were not Divided.*”

The last three days of Bertha's life on earth, had been filled with joy too great to last. Her cup of happiness was filled and brimming over, and as unalloyed felicity cannot long be the possession of mortals in this sublunary sphere, how tender and how wise the decree of the Great All-Father, that into life immortal our heroine should pass, in the midst of health and strength, and beauty, her beloved companion at her side.

In spirit-life together we must leave them. Perhaps their happy spirits may return, and speak to earth again, through the blessed open gateway of Spiritual Communion; but be this as it may, our work for the present, at least, is done; when having all hurriedly and imperfectly traced the fortunes of two loving hearts, who beat as one upon the earth, we leave them at that mystic Portal, which the painter truly names—

“*Mors Janua Vitæ.*”

FINIS.



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